

WOMEN'S ROLES IN CHURCH:
GENDER DICHOTOMY IN
CHINESE CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA AND
MAINLAND CHINA

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
TINA CHEN
MAY 2008

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PREFACE

My passion concerning the issue of women's roles inaugurated from my own personal experience. When I was a half-slumbering Christian, I did not know much about God, nor did I know much about the church. I served in the kitchen and children's ministry and that was the maximum I could possibly bring about with my minimal spiritual maturity and capacity. There was no question raised inside of me, nor was there any conflict. I was quite content in the roles I served in the church. However, as both my husband Steve and I were touched and shaped by God, I quit my job as a pharmacist, stayed home as a full-time mother, read my Bible days and nights, and started serving in women's ministry in church. Steve cut his hours in work and started serving more in church. He used to be self-employed and worked over eighty hours a week. As the calling of God for both of us became more and more intensified, Steve cut his working hours to half-time, served as a deacon in church, and went to seminary for part-time study. Being a father of two young boys and with a part-time job, part-time seminary study and a deacon's responsibility in church, Steve was fully occupied. When his seminary work got heavy, he sometimes had to stay home to study instead of attending church's prayer meetings. One Wednesday evening, as I finished all the house chores, I decided to attend church's prayer meeting all by myself since I was burning inside with the urge to pray day and night. When I met the pastor in our church who had left years ago, he questioned me, "Where is your husband?" "He's home studying." I replied. "You left kids home to him and come to church all by yourself?" He looked angry. "Oh, no, I have finished all the chores. I have bathed both of my boys and I have

brushed their teeth. They are even in their pajamas already. All they have to do is to play all by themselves for an hour and then go to bed. My boys are very well-disciplined. All Steve has to do is just to remind them to go to bed at 8:30. They will listen to their father. I have told them so.” I affirmed. “Steve still has to watch them, doesn’t he?” Our pastor grumbled such words out of his mouth and his eyeball popped behind his glasses. He gave me such a look and never bothered looking at me face to face any more from that moment on. I was shocked and immediately felt so ashamed. I thought if I finished every bit of my house chores I should be able to go to church to pray. I was wrong. Afterward, I learned that I had to come to church with my head covered- with the companion of my husband. I never dared to come to church all by myself anymore. However, “What can a woman do besides mopping the floor, doing the laundry, and changing diapers?” became a big question deep down inside my heart.

On another occasion, I had a close encounter with a retired missionary who was willing to fill in our church’s English pastor position temporarily. As we were chatting, he suddenly came up with an assertion like this, “I told my wife, I mind my business in the church and she minds her business in the kitchen. She does not bother me with my business and I don’t bother her with her business.” When I heard this utterance, I was stunned. He did not appear to be joking. His wife sat besides him smiling without a word. He was a godly man. How could he come up with something so cold, so heartless, and so harsh? And worst of all, he did not seem to feel anything wrong with it. In the next year of their service in our church, I often saw his wife but never heard her talking. She always wore a gentle smile on her face but never let her voice out.

Looking at her, I often had the wonder, “Does she have any feelings, mood, or even thoughts at all? Do women only belong to the kitchen? If yes, then why does God give women intelligence? Is church a forbidden place for women? Does a woman with voice mean ungodliness or rebellion? If yes, then why does God give women voice? How can “oneness” become real if two are minding each one’s business with no interaction, no common ground, or even no sharing in life at all?” All these questions have been in my mind for years. Why did God create women with mind and feelings if women are expected to cook, mop the floor, and change diapers only?

I would like to express my appreciation to the Doctor of Ministry program in Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Because of this program, I had the opportunity to look into women’s issues deeper and broader. The mentor of this program Dr. Alice Mathews has provided priceless historical facts and data, and instigated novel perspectives toward this issue. She and her husband Randy live their lives dedicated to God. They are living encouragement to the apprentice. Eleven other ladies of this cohort also have contributed their precious experiences and points of view. I am also thankful to my church, Rutgers Community Christian Church, who has supported my study in Gordon-Conwell and my thesis projects. Even though I personally may hold a somewhat divergent stance from my church, my church is always my sweet home and my love. Most of all, I am grateful to my family, my husband Steve and my two boys Andrew and Brian. They are the most significant support in my life even though we may not agree with each other in many aspects. Disagreement never affects any of our

loving relationship because our Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished the work of Oneness which shall be maintained regardless.

ABSTRACT

In the early centuries, gender distinction in character traits and types of work engaged has been clear. After industrial revolution, however, as public education and birth control accessible to the female in the recent centuries, more and more women have been assuming the traditional “male roles” in practically all spheres of life. Gender distinction in many areas is not crystal clear any longer. Inevitably, many people raise doubts that the refusal of women’s participation in certain religious positions is a true projection of faithfulness toward God. All these positions happen to be prominent leadership positions which possess power. The Apostle Paul did forbid women of certain churches in assuming certain positions. However, the same Paul also collaborated with and praised quite a few woman leaders. Throughout Biblical times, there were women who assumed the traditional gender roles, while there were also women who did not. The Bible does not seem to condemn or favor either type.

In the first project of this study, gender dichotomy in church ministries is more prominent in North American Chinese church than in Mainland China. With practically no women involved in leadership positions in North American Chinese church, men are not any more dedicated to the kingdom of God. As a matter of fact, there are more men fail to participate in any church ministry. Women suffer from a lack of spiritual fulfillment in life. In the second project, five women with leadership potential were identified to receive a ten month leadership training. In the process, they learned independency in handling life issues and direct personal relationship with their God. They become more submissive than before. Leadership does not make any woman more rebellious or less godly. It merely allows some women to live fulfilled lives.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

As Gove and Tudor noted, gender role is a master status or identity for both men and women and, as such, influences all other facets of activity.¹ Gender means destiny. Elizabeth Cady Stanton brought this to awareness in the nineteenth century.² What people can do is determined by their gender rather than the God-given gift and talent, individual natural inclination, subjective burden or personal calling. Men have to be out-spoken, aggressive, decisive; women are expected to be shy, quiet, withdrawn.³ Men belong to the conference room while women have to find comfort for themselves in the kitchen. In the church, men serve as elders, deacons, pastors and ushers while women work with the children, for the elderly, and in the kitchen. Before the nineteenth century, this has been regarded as a symbol of an orderly and harmonious community.⁴ Being accustomed to this perspective, women in general took this as a norm and failed to raise the question “Why?” or “Is this right?” until the rise of Women’s Liberation Movement in the late 1960s. The woman issue has then become a more and more

¹ Walter R. Gove and Jeanette F. Tudor, “Sex Role and Mental Illness,” *Am. J. of Sociology* 78 (1973) 52.

² Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott were rejected as legitimate delegates in the World Anti-slavery convention in London in 1840. With fury, Elizabeth Cady Stanton thus devoted herself in women’s rights. Eight years later, a convention was held in Seneca Fall in New York to deal with issues of women discrimination.

³ Paige W. Toller, Elizabeth A. Sutor and Todd C. Trautman, “Gender Role Identity and Attitudes Toward Feminism,” *Sex Roles: Am. J. of Research* (July 2004). In the United States, a successful man’s performance of high masculinity requires that the man be tough, in control, and aggressive, sometimes even violent. At the other extreme, a successful woman’s performance of high femininity requires that the woman be nurturing, physically attractive, and passive.

⁴ Lisa Harrison and Amanda B. Lynch, “Social Role theory and the Perceived Gender Role Orientation of Athletes,” *Sex Roles: Am. J. of Research* (Feb. 2005). Descriptive and injunctive social norms help to maintain adherence to traditional gender roles.

fervent debate especially over the past fifty years. Sociologists and psychologists have been investing numerous studies in the nature or nurture causes of gender similarity and dissimilarity. Is gender dichotomy a symbol of an orderly and harmonious community? Or, is it a phenomenon of a dominant-oppressive society? Shall Christendom, the kingdom of the liberated, demonstrate a picture of men and women performing in uniformed genre against their personal calling, subjective burden and individual natural inclination? Or, shall men and women work together cooperatively with their God-given talents and gifts in freedom? The purpose of this thesis is to yield some reflection in the issue of gender role dichotomy through a glimpse of Chinese churches in North America and Mainland China.

I. The Problem of Role:

According to *Changing Minds*:

People define roles for themselves and others based on social learning and reading.

People form expectations about the roles that they and others will play.

People subtly encourage others to act within the role expectations they have for them.

People will act within the roles they adopt.

People will fall rapidly into the expectations they have about the roles they take. In groups these take the form of shared expectations of behavior.

A trap of roles is that the role can literally take one over and one can forget his real values and beliefs.

*Role conflict can also occur when people have differing expectations of the roles. It also happens when people have different ideas about what they should be doing vs. the expectations that are put upon them.*⁵

Role is a term drawn from the language of theater. As depicted above, it describes the somewhat organized set of expected behaviors associated with a person's more-or-less identifiable position in a social organization. It is a patterned sequence of learned actions or deeds performed by a person in an interaction situation. Gender roles refer to behavior and characteristics that are considered both typical (gender-role stereotypes) and desirable (gender-role norms) for males and females in a particular culture. People define roles for themselves and others based on social demands and learning. As social demands change, roles change. The tighter the structure of a society is, the more rigid and clear the roles can be. Roles are the most rigid and clear in a military setting. People form expectations about the roles that they and others play. People subtly encourage or authoritatively demand others to act within the role expectations they set for them. People will act within the roles they adopt. Fulfillment of role expectations may become people's achievement and self-esteem, while role loss can lead to identity loss and loss of self-esteem. Role confusion may thus lead to confusion in self-identity and self-worth. People with the problem of role confusion many times do not possess confidence in whatever they engage in. A trap of roles is that the role can literally take people over and people can forget their real values and beliefs. In the church, the more clear the gender roles are, the more rigid the roles can be. As a result, male and female believers can possibly exert less their individual gift and talent

⁵ Changingminds.org is a large web site on all aspects of how we change what others think, believe, feel and do. Dec. 2007.

as well as their subjective burden and calling in freedom. While male and female believers in churches with clear and rigid gender roles fulfill their role requirements demanded by the authority, they may mistake it as fulfillment of their divine callings from above. Many of them may as well take the roles assigned to them for granted without bothering to seek the divine guidance and purpose. Those believers who experience conflict in the role assignment and their personal calling and burden will be confused and may lose their self identity and confidence.⁶

Roles are outcomes of social demands in order to maintain an ordered and balanced society. Roles start to emerge as society is being formed. People adapt themselves to the roles emerging until society stabilizes. The well-adapted roles thus become norms for men and women. People feel comfortable and confident as roles are settled. However, as society changes, roles change in order to fulfill the new demands. Controversial roles and confusion thus arise as people have already been accustomed to the norm set before. It takes time for people to adjust themselves to the new roles emerging and it takes time for people to accept the new roles that the self and others assume. As society settles, roles stabilize, people accept the new roles they and others assume. Comfort and confidence in self and others then arrive. The world has been changing in a faster and faster pace ever since the industrial revolution. Roles have not stopped changing ever since. As a result, role confusion and controversy keep arising. While people got accustomed to some of the changes surfaced a while ago, new changes

⁶ R. M. Chester, "Stress on Missionary Families Living in 'Other Culture' Situations," *J of Psychology and Christianity* 2:4 (1983) 30-37. and A. Greeley, "The Declining Morale of Women," *Sociology and Social Research* 73:2 (1989) 53-58.

come forth. Nowadays, women receiving education is beyond dispute. However, the issue of mothers working outside of the home remains controversial. Women assuming a director position in business is not problematic, while Christian women leading groups with both genders in church remains debatable.

As the world approached the new millennium, women in society have gained a range of opportunities that their grandmothers would never dream of. However, only a few of them have assumed public leadership positions in society and the majority of women still lack access to such status. The glass ceiling⁷ is still prominent in many hierarchical corporations and the political arena. Nevertheless, the general population holds a positive view regarding women's co-leadership with men.⁸ In religious institutions, the quest for women's leadership and gender equity has often fallen on deaf or defiant ears.⁹ The religious devotees seem to manifest more prejudice toward women's status. This is attributed to the conservative effects of traditional religiosity.¹⁰ Co-leadership of women with men is welcomed in society yet considered a sin and a

⁷ It is a metaphor for gender or racial prejudice and discrimination.

⁸ Men are hierarchical while women are relatively relational. It is noticed that women's skill in relationship is valuable and crucial in leadership. Linda Carli & Alice Eagly, "Gender, Hierarchy, and Leadership: An Introduction," *J. of Social Issues* 57:4 (2001) 629-636.

⁹ Nancy Nason-Clark, Book review on Catherine Wessinger's "Religious Institutions and Women's Leadership: New Roles Inside the Mainstream," *J. for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36 (1997) 330. Spiritual places of worship have welcomed women's voluntary labor but have been resistant to opening the doors of priesthood, power or religious authority to female followers. The pew rather than the pulpit was to be a woman's place; she was to serve as an auxiliary worker par excellence.

¹⁰ Edward C. Jr. Lehman, "The Local/Cosmopolitan Dichotomy and Acceptance of Women Clergy: A Replication and Extension of Roof," *J. for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25:4 (1986) 461. For at least half a century, sociologists and psychologists of religion have been puzzled by the complex relationships between religious involvement and a variety of social attitudes. Paradoxically, religious devotees seem at first glance to manifest more prejudices toward blacks, ethnic and religious minorities, persons with deviant life styles, etc., than do non-religious people. Some observers have been convinced of the linear relationship- the more traditionally religious, the more prejudiced- and have attributed it to the conservative effects of traditional religiosity.

sign of weak and inadequate male-leadership in church.¹¹ Religious doctrines and teachings are therefore accused of socializing women to a submissive role and imprisoning women in traditional unsatisfactory gender roles and denying them access to high status occupations.¹²

II. The Problem of Gender Dichotomy:

Societies in the past millennia before the industrial revolution bore little change. They were patriarchal in nature.¹³ Men's roles and women's roles in the majority part of the world carried much similarity. They were steady most of the time and they seemed crystal clear: with muscle and free from child-bearing, men went out farming, fishing, hunting or even fighting; while women, with less muscle and burdened with life-long child-bearing, stayed home raising children, taking care of the elderly and house chores. Being educated outside the home, with some knowledge of the world and, most of all, bringing the income home, men held the power.¹⁴ They spoke and gave orders.

¹¹Catherine Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrim: Female Preaching in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: U. of North Carolina, 1998). In Church history, spiritual revivals were tightly associated with the rise of female preachers. However, as the revivals reposed and organizations were instituted, female preachers became assistants to their husbands and female preaching was no longer a miraculous sign of God's grace but a sin against nature. Female preaching was viewed as a symbol of male crumbling authority in the wake of church disestablishment.

¹² William Sims Bainbridge and Laurie Russell Hatch, "Women's Access to Elite Careers: An Search of a Religion Effect," *J. for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21 (1982) 242.

¹³ A. Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1976). Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men- by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male...

¹⁴ Veronica Tichenor, "Maintaining Men's Dominance: Negotiating Identity and Power When She Earns More," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* (Aug. 2005). Breadwinning has traditionally conferred substantial privileges on men within the family. Earning the money meant that men also earned the right to control it; they doled out funds to other family members and typically maintained a portion for their own use. This kind of control often extended to other areas of family life as well, as men claimed the

Women, remaining domestic with neither education nor much knowledge, and most of all, bringing nothing tangible home, listened and obeyed.¹⁵ Sociologist Max Weber¹⁶ speaks of domination as one of the most important elements of communal action. "*Without exception every sphere of social action is profoundly influenced by structures of dominancy . . . Domination constitutes a special case of power*". Weber refers to the legitimate forms of domination by what he called *authority*. The Bible, being written in the time of male domination, describes men's roles and women's roles according to such scenery.

However, working outside of the home has no longer been a task requiring merely muscles after the industrial revolution. With the commencement of techniques in birth control, women were set free from the life-long burden of child-bearing. In addition, with the availability of public education, child-rearing is no longer a private practice carried out at home alone. As the world approached this new millennium, the era celebrating diversity, many new professions have been developed in societies. Women, being educated and free from child bearing and rearing, have been participating

authority to make household decisions, both large and small. Being the breadwinner has also been linked to other advantages within marriage; for example, men have commonly enjoyed ample leisure time as well as freedom from domestic responsibilities. In these fundamental ways, a man's income has guaranteed him greater power and privilege within marriage.

¹⁵ Veronica Tichenor, "Maintaining Men's Dominance: Negotiating Identity and Power When She Earns More," *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* (Aug. 2005). This equation of money with power has led millions of women to pursue education and employment as the keys to both personal empowerment and more egalitarian relationships with men. If men's power is rooted in their incomes, then women need access to independent wages in order to increase their power vis-à-vis their husbands. Indeed, this logic drove the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Popular writers and scholars urged women to pursue higher education and prepare to enter the world of paid work on the same footing as men, so that women could both improve their sense of personal competence and increase their autonomy within their most intimate relationships. Women responded to these new opportunities outside the home and fueled one of the most dramatic social shifts of the twentieth century.

¹⁶ 1864-1920.

in many of such tasks.¹⁷ Men, as generally agreed upon with no argument, also have to carry out part of the responsibility in children rearing at home. Women go out to work as men did while men raise children at home as women did. Men's roles and women's roles in society, therefore, are no longer crystal clear.¹⁸ The traditional patterns of status-role expectation have been, and are being, replaced by varying status role expectations.¹⁹ Being educated and with knowledge and insight, women little by little gain their voice. They do not merely listen and obey silently any more. Therefore, a greater and greater discrepancy grew regarding women in society and what has been taught in the church. The world has had a difficult time to adjust their comfort zone and their criterion of woman's virtue. However, they seem to be able to accustom themselves according to the new dimension without enormous arguments or debates. Mulan has been well accepted and became popular in place of Snow White. The world merely migrates as the old meadow provides no more alfalfa. To them, men's roles and

¹⁷ M. Gay Hubbard, *Women: The Misunderstood Majority* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003). In the subtle revolution, the year 1980 was an important date, it was the year of the "tipping point", the point at which more than half of all married women were employed outside the home. In 1980, being employed had become, in the real world of everyday living, "...a normative life style for married women as well as for married men." For the first time in recent history, married women who were not in the labor force had become a minority. This tipping point is referred to a great geological shift: "a whole sociological structure had tipped and its center of gravity shifted."

¹⁸ Alice P Mathews and M. Gay Hubbard, *Marriage Made in Eden: A Pre-Modern Perspective for a Post-Modern world* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004). As a matter of fact, shared parenting and shared provision is discernable in the biblical texts. The book of proverbs, gathering the wisdom of the people of God under the inspiration of God's Spirit, opens with a father teaching his children and reminding his son to listen also to what his mother is teaching him- shared parenting. The book closes with a mother teaching her son, king Lemuel, and her teaching includes a portrait of a good wife actively participating in providing for her family. "She seeks wool and flax and works with eager hands... she considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard... she makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes." The model of shared parenting and shared provision shines through the Book of Proverbs.

¹⁹ John Jr. Moland, "Social Change, Social Inequality & Intergroup Tensions," *Social Forces* 75:2 (Dec. 1996) 403-421.

women's roles are not a matter of right-or-wrong, they are merely a matter of pragmatics.

However, Christians, the people of the book, who consider the world sinful, take pride in their distinction from the world and at times even enjoy warring against the world. They refuse to move along with the tide of the world. The biblical world is a patriarchal one. As Mary E. Shields describes,

*The biblical world is a patriarchal one. In it men rule and are the full members of society, while women have little or no power and are only marginally included in society. The typical woman's role in the Bible is that of a submissive wife and mother- the woman's status is defined by her relationship to the men in her family, clan or tribe.*²⁰

Arguments and debates have been roaring regarding the exegesis and the contextual or non-contextual nature of the scriptures describing women's roles.²¹ Women's roles in both the Old Testament times and the New Testament times have been thoroughly reviewed over and over. Those who embrace patriarchy, who advocate gender dichotomy according to the literal teachings of some biblical passages, refuse to recognize the subordinate's independent subjectivity.²² They consider women in leadership to be a violation of the God-given order of family life and church life.²³

²⁰ Mary E. Shields, "Subverting A Man of God, Elevating a Woman: Role and Power Reversals in 2 Kings 4," *J. for the Study of the OT* 58 (1993).

²¹ The center of many debates is the arguments in the nature of women's role in scripture. Conservatives believe it a theological issue while Egalitarians consider it a sociological issue. Details will be in later chapters.

²² Linda L. Carli and Alice H. Eagly, "Gender, Hierarchy, and Leadership: An Introduction," *J. of Social Issues* 57:4 (2001) 629-636.

²³ Nadine Pence Frantz and Deborah L. Silver, "Women in Leadership: A Theological Perspective," *Brethren Life and Thought* 30:1 (1985).

III. The Problem of Culture in Biblical Description:

The revelation of God himself, as well as his salvation plan, is disclosed to his elects through the history of the people Israel. Jesus, the Word of God, came to this world in a specific historical time, in a certain geographical region and through a particular ethnic group of people. The gospel, therefore, has been spreading from that region, by a few of that particular ethnic group of people and from that time on. Christians, the people of God, come to the apprehension of God through the understanding in their culture. Nowadays, even the understanding of the scripture has been progressing through the comprehension of various cultures at different times. Truth is transmitted by way of culture from beginning to end. In this era, many people wonder if there is any “pure” truth available to people which can be entirely disentangled from any cultural reference. If there is such “pure” truth, its perception, significance, undertaking and integration will inevitably be bound to human cultural thoughts and minds, languages as well as sociological backdrops. Cultural anthropologists have come up with many descriptions and definitions regarding this term “culture”. The Vancouver Assembly defined it as:

*Culture is what holds a community together, giving a common framework of meaning. It is preserved in language, thought patterns, ways of life, attitudes, symbols and presuppositions, and is celebrated in art, music, drama, literature and the like. It constitutes the collective memory of the people and the collective heritage which will be handed down to generations still to come.*²⁴

People have been told what to do, what to learn, how to do things, how to learn, and so on by others from their birth on with or without their awareness and

²⁴ Eugene L. Stockwell, “Gospel and Culture,” *International Review of Mission* 74:294 (1985).

willingness.²⁵ This informed cognizance becomes the foundation for later development. One can pick and choose only from what has been available to him in his surroundings and based on the groundwork already built by others from beginning to end. Culture, therefore, is like color-tinted eye glasses for people who are the congenital vision impaired. Everyone with debilitated vision has to wear them. Not wearing them, no one can see things. Yet wearing them, every one sees things with certain tinted color. After a while, no one realizes he is seeing things through the tinted lenses any more. People with glasses of different tints often wonder which one of them sees things the right color. They may, therefore, fight and argue. The stronger ones win and the weaker ones are then taught by the stronger ones what the color for each thing should be. When the weaker group of people perceive things of a different color, they are told that they are wrong. They give up their own perception and adopt the practice set up by the other group. After a while, the weaker group loses their own perception. In order to maintain a peaceful and argument-free world, the weaker ones are told to keep silent and obey. It is a virtue. It seems safer and less argumentative if every one wears glasses of the same tint.

In the past, the voice of the white male theologians has dominated Christendom for centuries. They were the ones determining the yes-or-no and the right-or-wrong for the rest of the ethnic peoples in the rest of the whole world. They were the norm. However, failures in spreading the gospel in foreign mission fields in the nineteenth

²⁵ Maria Harris, *Women and Teaching* (New York: Paulist, 1988). We are taught from our childhood on to read from left to right rather than any other way. We are taught what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable and what is not. We are taught what kind of color is called “green” and what kind of color is called “red” and not any other way. We are so used to be taught by the experience not our own. This becomes our basic belief in life even without any awareness.

century brought about the doubts about universalization of the white practice to the whole entire world.²⁶ Missionary work has even been considered to be an invasion by the Imperialism and Capitalism of the Westerners into the Third World.²⁷ At the same time, the Abolitionist Movement in North America provoked doubt in the blind obedience toward the literal interpretation of the segmented scriptures with no regard toward the contemporary cultural settings.²⁸ Holy Scripture is culturally contextual.²⁹ Truth is made known through human culture. Later on, the civil rights and black power movements in the 1960s further challenged white Christendom. Voices of the oppressed began to sound and little by little became recognized and appreciated.³⁰ As the world is

²⁶ Dalila Nayap-Pot, "A Maya Woman Reflects upon Gospel and Culture," *International review of Mission* 36 (1997). The Spanish missionaries sent to evangelize them, despite learning their language and appreciating their culture, did everything possible to destroy that culture because they consider it diabolical. Many third countries, including China, have rejected Christianity in order to preserve and maintain their own integrity in their history and culture. At times, missionaries were even persecuted and expelled out of the foreign lands because of this particular reason.

²⁷ Even to this date, over a century from the Opium Wars and the Coalition of Eight Countries against China in the Chin Dynasty, numerous Chinese intellectuals still hold the belief that the missionary work in China is a tool utilized by the White to impose their Imperialism to the land of China. Christianity invaded the land of China through way of the Westerners' military forces. In order to take over the world completely, Westerners took control of the Third World spiritually, culturally, as well as politically. A famous poem expresses that China is perished in the Western chocolate, panty hose, high heels and churches with cathedral ceilings.

²⁸ Many reputed theologians and denominations held the position of anti-abolitionism because the Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament establishes, regulates, supports and sanctions such practice. Abraham is a slave owner who owns hundreds of slaves. Deuteronomy is full of regulations regarding masters and slaves. Further on in the New Testament, Paul teaches slaves to stay in their bondage predicament and serve their masters as an act to serve the Lord.

²⁹ The Quakers rather than the Puritans showed the greatest zeal in anti-slavery. Hazel Catherine Wolf, *On Freedom's Altar* (Madison: U of Wisconsin, 1952) 11. The abolitionists advocate the general principles of equality of all men and love demonstrated by Jesus Christ and his teaching. Love your neighbor as yourself. The Abolitionist movement grew slowly. Little by little Christians realize that even though scripture has many regulations regarding slavery, slavery is indeed immoral. The slavery tolerated by the Scriptures must be understood in its historical context. Old Testament laws regulating slavery are troublesome by modern standards, but in their historical context they provided a degree of social recognition and legal protection to slaves that was advanced for its time .

³⁰ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986). "I was completely unaware of the beginning of liberation theology in the Third World, especially in Latin America. Neither did I know much about the theme of liberation in African-American history and culture.

entering this post-modern era which celebrates diversity, welcomes relativism and recognizes subjectivity,³¹ the monopoly of the white men's theology is once again under siege. Truth, little by little, is no longer the stagnant possession owned by the white male theologians but the dynamic approach through the diversified members of various cultures in the entire body of Christ throughout the whole time in history. It happens to be in the midst of the process of this transition now. During this transition, many of the practices that used to be taken for granted as "absolute truth" have been questioned and re-examined under various tints of eye glasses. The applications of many such "absolute truths" in this contemporary world (which is already two millennia away from the biblical time) have become a big issue of concern. Exegesis of the Bible, therefore, has to be historically and culturally contextualized.³² Preaching is under such a challenge too.³³ Theology also has to embrace this matter. As Nancey Murphey well stated in her book *Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism*:

Contributions to the Christian theological tradition must, by definition, take the Christian Scriptures as authoritative, but in its application of those texts, it must pay attention to the contemporary context. While the texts themselves are simply given, their interpretation will be affected by a variety of assumptions, including theological positions.

Unfortunately, my formal theological and historical knowledge was primarily limited to the dominant perspectives of North America and Europe. But, despite these limitations, I was determined to speak a liberating word for and to African-American Christians, using the theological resources at my disposal."

³¹ Nancey Murphey, *Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity International, 1997). The cognitive model is pre-modern, the experiential-expressivist model is modern, and the cultural-linguistic model is postmodern.

³² Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1992). Scripture is rooted in history and claims to be a historical document, the record of God's self-revelation to man. As such, we must understand it in the context of its history.

³³ Sidney Greidanus, *The modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988). The message of all biblical genres of literature is in one way or another dependent on the reality of specific historical events proclaimed in the Bible.

Nowadays, the question is whether there is any “pure” theological issue existing with no cultural reference. Going outside the boundaries of contextual analysis leads to potential bias in interpretation.³⁴ It will be erroneous if women’s roles described in the Bible are isolated from their cultural parameters.

IV. The Debates of Women’s Issues:

To every one’s surprise, women, the majority and, of course, the largest cultural group in the whole world, have been over-looked and neglected for millennia. They have been almost completely silent for thousands of years. They have been listening without speaking, and told what to do and what not to do without even questioning. They exist yet are not recognized. Men have been the ones speaking, teaching, writing books, as well as publishing. The Caucasians tend to see themselves as generic human, and to see only people of color as having a racial-ethnic identity. Similarly, men see themselves as having no gender while women are gendered beings.³⁵ Men’s likes and dislikes set the standard of women’s beauty, nobility, value, and even virtue. They are also the ones deciding what women can do.³⁶ Nineteenth-century male religious commentators were involved in a discursive process of defining “fit work” for women. British historian Linda Wilson has argued, this involved activities that could be contained within an “angel out of the house” stereotype which was itself an extension of the “angel in the house” role that dominated contemporary constructions of respectable

³⁴ Dov. Liberman, and Christopher Blazina, “The Myth of Old European Feminism: The Importance of Socio-Cultural Contextual Analysis,” *J. of Men’s Studies* 04-30 (2003) 325.

³⁵ Men’s sports are “sports”, while women’s sports are “woman’s sports”.

³⁶ During wars, men go to the front line to fight. Women stay at the home land and therefore pick up all the men’s work in society. However, as men come back to the home land, they take up all the work in society and women then return back to their homes.

femininity.³⁷ As Susanne Scholz noticed in her review in *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*:

*The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) was founded in 1987 by several evangelical leaders and is influential among evangelical authors who write prolifically on the Bible and gender. Among its stated purposes is “to study and set forth the Biblical view of the relationship between men and women, especially in the home and in the church. Needless to say, men dominate the organization. Of the seven members of the Board of Directors, only one is a woman, and she is the “secretary”. Similarly, of the twenty-eight council members, only six are women. Four of them self-identify as “homemakers”, one as a pastor’s wife, and one as a director of Women’s Missionary Union and Women’s Ministries.”*³⁸

Ruth Wallace also noted

*My personal observations of patriarchal symbol during the final session of Vatican II in 1965 increased my understanding of women’s place in the church. During council deliberations, the authorized presence of only twenty two women auditors with no voting power compared to three thousand men, of whom 2,540 were bishops with voting rights, was a clear indication of the predominance of patriarchal values. Women were virtually invisible and entirely silent when decisions were made regarding important structural changes affecting all members of the church.”*³⁹

This is by no means an unusual phenomenon. It does not merely take place in CBMW or Vatican II, it also happens in the majority of churches and Christian organizations,⁴⁰ large or small, in North America.⁴¹ This is not merely taking place now, it has been happening for centuries.⁴²

³⁷ L. Wilson, “Constrained by Zeal: Women in Mid-Nineteenth Century Nonconformist Churches,” *J. of Religious History* 23 (June 1999) 188.

³⁸ Susanne Scholz, “The Christian right’s discourse on Gender and the Bible,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21:1 (Spring 2005) 81. CBMW can be accessed through web www.cbmw.org.

³⁹ Ruth Wallace, “Women and Religion: The Transformation of Leadership Roles,” *J. for the scientific Study of Religion* 39:4 (2000) 506.

⁴⁰ Bryant Scott E. also noted in “The Role of Women and Women’s Issues in the Baptist World Alliance,” *Baptist History and Heritage*. 41 no. 1 (2006) 55-65.

⁴¹ The Bible, selectively read (as both Roman Catholics and Protestants have always done), literally interpreted in translation made by men, the Bible continues to offer a point of view on women that

There have been up-rising hot debates regarding the woman issues in the society as well as in the church in the last century, touching such issues as social justice for men and women regarding suffrage, job opportunities and wages;⁴³ women's roles at home, in the community, as well as in the church;⁴⁴ and the ordination of women. An increased focus has been placed worldwide on the roles of women in all spheres of life since the late nineteenth century. There has been dramatic escalation in the literature encompassing women's studies: women's contribution and social roles in history; women's perspectives, thoughts and way of learning... Feminist thought challenges every aspect of life and society, and every traditional basis on which both church and society are built. Unfortunately, churches have been slow and reluctant to rise to this challenge. In the very beginning, the church was actually the one first to recognize and to attempt in bringing resolution to this issue. Eight years after the incidence at the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott of

encourages their relegation to the gallery of the synagogue, the back of the church, the kitchen of the house.

⁴² Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament times to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books/Zondervan, 1987). Women missionaries did tremendous work in the mission field. However, once men joined such missionary work and started to form an organization, women were out of such a mission organization.

⁴³ Certain jobs such as engineering, police officers and military commissioners are considered "men's job", while secretaries, school teachers and nurses are considered "women's job". According to the statistics, the average salary of "women's jobs" is significantly lower than that of "men's jobs". When men and women are performing the same kind of task, the average salary for women is significantly lower than that of men.

⁴⁴ The majority invisible work in the church is done by women, such as taking care of the elderly and the babies, leading of children's choir and Sunday School, food preparation, church decoration and etc., while the majority of visible work is performed by men, such work as ushering, distribution of the sacrament, teaching adult Sunday School, leadership positions and standing behind the pulpit delivering messages. Women can prepare but can not distribute the sacrament. Women assume leadership positions in society as well as in government and making significant decisions yet can not serve as leaders or making decisions in the church. Women can teach children Sunday School but can not teach adult Sunday School. Women can "share" in small group settings but can not "preach" to the congregations. In other words, women can do all the work but can not be visible in the church.

Philadelphia and many other godly men and women of a number about three hundred, gathered at the Wesleyan Chapel at Seneca Falls, New York on July 19, 1848.⁴⁵ They came up with twelve resolutions, using the Declaration of Independence as a model, to institute the equality of men and women. Moreover, missionaries, sisterhoods and ladies societies in Britain and the United States as a result of evangelical awakening throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth century have been regarded as the earliest feminist movements.⁴⁶ These movements eventually led to a concern with social issues such as slavery, prostitution, and women's oppression. Protestantism is considered as one of the three intellectual feminist tradition.⁴⁷

The earliest feminist thoughts can be dated back to the Enlightenment by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Marquis deCondorcet championing women's education. There have been three waves in women's movements afterwards. The first wave in the mid-nineteenth century worked to elevate the rights of women in the public activities, particularly the rights of married women in gaining independence from their husbands and the right of all women to receive an education. The Suffrage Movement, the second wave movement, was stimulated by the good government branch of the Progressive Movement in the early decades of the twentieth century. The contemporary movement beginning in the mid-sixties is seen as the third wave of conscious female activism. The laws for equal pay and equal opportunity provided a backdrop for this movement. The term Feminism was coined. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was

⁴⁵ Refer to the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, Seneca Falls.

⁴⁶ Olive Banks, *Faces of Feminism* (Oxford, New York: B. Blackwell, 1986) 13-17.

⁴⁷ The other two are Enlightenment philosophers and socialist feminism. Ibid., 7-8.

established in 1966 to address women's rights in seven areas including employment, religion, family, mass media, politics, and female poverty.

The experience of women within the Roman Catholic church, according to Teresa Amott,⁴⁸ was in some ways different, but in other ways similar to what happened in the secular world. Women had little status or power within the churches. Its rigid religious hierarchy maintained the power of the male clergy. However, in Protestant churches, there has been an increased number and roles of women and growing female influence over clergy. Barbara Welter has called this the "feminization" of American Protestantism. The feminization of the churches actually has its origins in the eighteenth century, if not earlier. However, such evangelical activities might have brought a short term expansion of female roles but a long term contraction as maternal evangelism diminished into maternal associations narrowly concerned with children and family.

V. The Dilemma of North American Chinese Christian Women:

China is a country with a relatively long history. She is famous for her long history of women's oppression characterized by foot-binding.⁴⁹ Women were exclusively domestically bound. Pleasing men was the only purpose for women to

⁴⁸ Teresa L. Amott and Julie A. Matthael, *Race, Gender and Work: A Multicultural Economic History of Women in the United States* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1991).

⁴⁹ In order to prevent the feet from growing into their full size, the noble Chinese girls at the age about five had to have their toes fractured and tied to the bottom of the soles by wrapping with layers of cloth. This is a painful process. After the wound was healed in several months, these girls were not able to walk fast any more, not to mention running. Only the slave girls, who had to perform heavy labor when they grew up, could be waived of such practice. However, girls with "big feet" could not be married to any noble man. They remained slaves for the rest of their lives. Foot-binding is a symbol of female nobility for thousands of years in China until the late 19th and early 20th century. The smaller the feet were tied to, the nobler the girl would become.

exist.⁵⁰ The outside world was a battle ground for men only. A noble woman would not even offer her opinion to influence her men.⁵¹ As Opium wars and the War of the Coalition of Eight Countries in the late nineteenth century shattered the dignity of this country completely, foot-binding, the symbol of women's virtue and nobility for thousands of years, all of a sudden turned into a great shame of barbarian male ego. As the Communists took over China in 1949, they rebelled against all her history, tradition and moral standards.⁵² Women were not merely liberated, they bounced to the other extreme. While the Communists progressed in taking over China, women exerted their great contribution.⁵³ Therefore, Prime Minister Mao had a famous saying, "Women hold up half of the sky." After the cultural revolution, competitive higher education was available to the able, regardless of gender. Women are to work as hard as men. Men cook and take care of the home as much as, if not more than, women. Children are raised up in the government's nurseries. Many of them come home only at weekends. Mao's wife Jiang Qin, one of the Gang of Four, was a woman of strong will. She became the prototype of a contemporary aggressive out-spoken woman at the time. She fought for political power as much and as violently as men. Up to now, women in

⁵⁰ The noble temperament of a women is characterized by "three submissions": submission to her father in childhood, submission to her husband in adulthood, and submission to her son after her husband's decease.

⁵¹ It was a common practice forbidding women to learn lest women's opinion influences men's decision. In many dynasties, there was written law forbidding women to gain any knowledge in politics lest they influence their men in making political decisions.

⁵² When Communists gained their political power in China, they commenced the Cultural Revolution 1966 to 1976. During that period, they not merely burned all the traditional literatures in every household but also put all the intellectuals in prison or expelled them to remote provinces to do hard labor work as punishment for their "polluting the country with their old-fashioned knowledge". All the traditional "saints" and moralists including Confucius were under criticism.

⁵³ Communists used women to spy out information from the other party and turned many influential men into Communists.

China remain aggressive even after Jiang Qin stepped down from the political stage as the Gang of Four lost their power. Jiang Quin has lost and is no more. She was greatly persecuted and has been harshly criticized even up to the present. However, her shadow is still seen in every corner of the streets in China. Today, thirty some years after Mao's decease, his famous saying still exerts great influence in China. Having been bounced from the foot-binding for less than a hundred years, women in China now indulge themselves in the freedom of complete equality with men. They even enjoy their complete freedom in sexuality as much as, if not more than, men.

As thousands and thousands of missionaries were expelled from China at the time Communists took over the land, Westerners regarded all the previous missionary work in China coming to an end. The Bible was banned and Christians were persecuted. However, as the door of China opened again in 1976 after Mao's decease, to every one's surprise, the number of believers had grown from eight hundred forty thousand in 1949 to eighty million in these twenty-seven years.⁵⁴ The great majority of them were in rural areas belonging to the house churches.⁵⁵ The great majority of their leaders were women. Many of them were in their late teens to early twenties.⁵⁶ With millions and

⁵⁴ Jonathan Chao, *A History of Christianity in Socialist China 1949-1997* (Taipei, Taiwan: CMI, 1997). House churches in China grew as political persecution went on. The worse the persecution became, the greater the churches grew. There were numerous testimonies of the same sort that when the ministers were free in preaching, there were no new converts, nor any sign of church growth in maturity. However, as they were greatly persecuted in prison, their churches grew mysteriously in number as well as in maturity.

⁵⁵ The term *house church* is in contrast to *three-self church*. Three-self church is the government supervised church whose organization, clergy training and hiring, offering management, and meeting schedules, frequencies, as well as form are determined by the government. Christians faithful to God do not consider such practice biblical and therefore refuse to joint. They meet in their homes privately. The term *house church* is therefore gained. Rebellious against government's control, house church has been greatly persecuted even up to this date.

millions of unsaved souls in mind, house churches in China had no other vision but to preach the gospel to the lost. As persecution went on, there was no way for them to establish any official church or Christian organization. Isolated from the Western world and with limited segments of the Bible available, the only force driving the growth of the house churches in China is nothing but the power of the Spirit. If any Christian who is eager to appreciate the kind of church which is established by the power of the Spirit without much bondage of human tradition or manipulation, the house church in China might be the one.

As the door of China began to open, Chinese intellectuals started to come to North America and other parts of the Western world for freedom, political stability, better living and better opportunities. The incidence of Tian An Men Square⁵⁷ shattered the dreams of many Chinese intellectuals. They gushed into this country for security, equality, and political freedom. With the mercy of the Lord, a great number of them became Christians. A common phenomenon in the North American Chinese Churches in the last fifteen years is the great number of new converts from Mainland China. Joining North American Chinese churches, the female believers are taught to stay home taking care of the children, to be silent in the church and to submit to their husbands regardless. Such deeds are considered godly. Less than a hundred years from the release of the foot-binding, female Christians from China are confused. They feel that

⁵⁶ In rural areas, it is not uncommon to see a girl of eighteen or nineteen years of age leading scores of house churches with a total number of believers over one thousand.

⁵⁷ It was a student protest in 1989. Respectful scholars and college students from superlative colleges sat at Tian An Men Square in Beijing, the capital, requesting their voice be heard regarding democracy of China. Armies and tanks were mobilized to tyrannize these young people of nobility. After this incidence, young people lost their hope in government and China democracy. Intellectuals gush abroad as a result.

they are pushed back to the era of foot-binding. They lose their sense of right and wrong. Thousands of years of women's virtue of ignorance⁵⁸ and domesticity became wrong in China and now becomes right again in North American Christian churches. Chinese Christian men in North America enjoy gaining back the power and authority very much. With families back in China, North American Chinese Christian women face the dilemma of pleasing the church by staying home or pleasing their families in China by working outside of the home. Trained to be independent, aggressive and outspoken from youth on, Chinese Christian women have a difficult time to undo what they have learned. However, the traditional nature of the Oriental is still conservative and obedient. They are willing to swallow regardless. Nevertheless, in the process of learning, undoing and re-learning; it is an interesting issue to ponder upon: whether Christianity is to liberate women or to put women back in bondage.

As Judith Bennett noted, "*Gender history reminds us that many seemingly 'natural' ideas about women and men are, in fact, socially constructed, and it has the potential to demolish entirely the academic 'ghettoization' of women's history.*"⁵⁹ Gender study in religious groups may effect a paradigm shift. Gender study, predictably, is less sanguine⁶⁰ and less noticeable in religious circles than in other areas of the humanities.⁶¹ However, there is always a deep concern inside the heart of sincere

⁵⁸ There is a famous old Chinese saying, "The virtue of a woman is her ignorance." since such woman is silent, submissive, dependent and easy to control. Many of the Chinese kings even kept their people, men and women, uneducated in order to control them with ease.

⁵⁹ Joan Wallach Scott ed., *Feminism and History* (New York: Oxford, 1996) 258.

⁶⁰ Elizabeth A. Clark, "Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History," *Church History* 70:3 (Sep. 2001) 395-426.

Christian women: to serve God with all their heart and with all their might. In a world with a fast changing pace, it is essential to raise the issue whether women's godliness shall bear the same outlook as centuries ago where human culture was completely different from what is now. Women and men are tightly intertwined. The women's issue is not merely significant for women. It is also an indispensable issue for men.

⁶¹ Ursula King, "Introduction: Gender and the Study of Religion," in *Religion and Gender*. Ed. King (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 2-3,22.

CHAPTER TWO

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Theology, as defined by Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, is the study of God, his attributes, and his relationship with man and the universe.⁶² All life questions of humankind ultimately end in theology, because the origin, meanings and purpose of life are beyond life itself. These questions converge in and diverge from God. As women are created in the image of God, the issues of women are inevitably attached to the attributes and the will of the Lord. Does God create men and women with explicit dichotomous character features? Does he designate men and women with distinct dichotomous assignments? And, does God proscribe women from any role play, leadership roles in particular? This chapter will scrutinize the lives of many biblical men as well as women throughout the Bible, make an attempt to examine the progression of roles throughout biblical times, and hopefully bring to light the attributes of God toward the issue of gender roles. This chapter hopefully may offer some perspective toward the issue of gender roles.

I. Gender Dichotomy in Characters:

⁶² Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Who Needs Theology: An Invitation to the Study of God* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1996). 37.

Gender dichotomy in character⁶³ is not merely an issue of concern in Christendom, it has also been hotly debated in society.⁶⁴ In Christendom, gender dichotomy in character is not only considered as virtue and godliness, but is also regarded as a sign of a harmonious Kingdom of God. Many churches, therefore, have been teaching and even reinforcing such practices as a token of personal piety and faithfulness toward God and his word. They assert that an individual's confidence or self-esteem is derived from gender dichotomy. Without the teaching of gender dichotomy, boys and girls will be confused of who they are.⁶⁵ Homosexuality is a result of such confusion.⁶⁶ Generally speaking, power, strength, boldness, assertiveness, decisiveness, vigorousness, dignity, intelligence, knowledgeability, independency, responsibility, aggressiveness, sociability, toughness, dignity... are considered masculine character traits; while “*responsiveness, compassion, endurance, gentleness, warmth, tenderness, hospitality, diplomacy, consideration, politeness, supportiveness, intuition, wisdom, sensitivity, spirituality, sincerity, vulnerability, obedience, trustworthiness, gracefulness, sweetness, expressiveness, quietness, faithfulness, purity...*” are regarded as feminine traits.⁶⁷

⁶³ Men should behave in certain ways and women should behave in quite opposite ways. They have to be absolutely distinct as black and white.

⁶⁴ There have been debates regarding the nature or nurture causes of gender distinction. Some believe men and women are distinctly different from birth while others believe the difference is culturally taught.

⁶⁵ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991) 33. The authors assert that it is essential to teach boys and girls from their youth on what and how boys and girls, and men and women should do and behave. Nevertheless, Wayne Grudem in his *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004) 72, has a quote from Thomas Schreiner opposing gender stereotype. Complementarians have been modifying their advocates in the past ten years.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 33. As a matter of fact, many homosexual men are from families strict in gender dichotomy in characters. These teachings conflicting their natural traits make them confused of who they really are.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 46. Quoted from Rhonda Chervin's *Feminine, Free and Faithfulness* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986) 15.

Nevertheless, according to the biblical description, there are godly women with many characteristic masculine features and there are godly men with some typical feminine traits.

Deborah was a prophetess in the hill country of Ephraim (Judges 4:4) and Israelites came to her for judgment (Judges 4:5). Being a judge who was recognized by the public, she was impartial, independent, decisive and responsible. Sending for Barak from Kedesh in Naphtali (Judges 4:6), she apparently possessed great power. Fighting against Sisera, Deborah went with Barak upon his request and not a man of Sisera's army was left alive (Judges 4:16). This, together with the song Deborah and Barak sang, revealed her as independent, courageous (Judges 5:12), tough, and even aggressive (Judges 5:19-24). Deborah possessed many masculine traits. Nevertheless, she was a godly woman. She did not seem to suffer from any gender confusion. She simply lived out the life God intended her to live.

When the Book of the Law was found in the eighteenth year of the reign of King Josiah, Hilkiah the high Priest, Ahikam, Achor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to Huldah in one accord seeking the word of the Lord (2 Kings 22:14). This revealed Huldah as inspirational, knowledgeable and trustworthy. She was publicly acknowledged by prominent leaders of the nation. Her words to them as a challenge of repentance revealed her as decisive, assertive and courageous (2 Kings 22:15-20). Like Deborah, Huldah demonstrated many masculine character traits. Nevertheless, she was a godly woman.

Proverbs, the wisdom literature written by the sages to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young (Prov. 1:4), and to make wise men wiser (1:5); is filled with God-fearing instructions. The last chapter offers a portrait of a woman with noble character⁶⁸ (Prov. 31:10-31).⁶⁹ This woman is reliable, intelligent and independent for “*the heart of her husband trusts in her so that he has no lack of gain*” (Prov. 31:11). She is aggressive for “*She seeks wool and flax, and she works with her palms with delight*” (Prov. 31:13). She is hard-working and vigorous for “*She also rises while it is still night...*” (Prov. 31:15), and “*She tastes whether her gain is good, and her lamp does not go out by night*” (Prov. 31:18). She is decisive and assertive for “*She has examined a field, and takes it; she plants a vineyard from the fruit of her hands*” (Prov. 31:16). She intentionally makes herself strong for “*She has girded her loins with strength, and has made her arms strong*” (Prov. 31:17). She is also dignified for “*Strength and dignity are her clothing...*” (Prov. 31:25). She is a strong leader in her whole household for “*She watches the way of her household...*” (Prov. 31:27). This woman of noble character demonstrates plenty of the believed masculine temperament. She is the prototype of an ideal woman taught and recited from generation to generation.⁷⁰ She is confident enough that she does not show any confusion in her gender character traits.

⁶⁸ The Hebrew word translated “noble character” is “hayil”. This word appeared 246 times in the Old Testament, meaning “strong, mighty and valiant”. It was often used in the armies and the mighty men of David.

⁶⁹ This woman might not be a real person. However, she is an ideal model of the contemporary women.

⁷⁰ Proverbs 31:10-31 is composed in the form of acrostic poetry. The purpose of acrostic writing is for men to memorize.

There were many other women in the Bible who also exhibited the culturally-deemed masculine characters, such as Abigail and Rahab. When the servant of Nabal sensed the upcoming disaster when Nabal rejected David's request and humiliated David's servants, he went to Abigail for resolution (1 Sam. 25:14-17). Abigail must have been proven prudent and able in the household of Nabal. Servants went to her instead of Nabal or any other man at the time of predicament. As soon as Abigail received the message of David's coming, without informing her husband or consulting with any other man, she immediately prepared to meet David (1 Sam. 25:18-19). She was intelligent, diplomatic, decisive, independent and courageous. She did not keep quiet nor be passive. Her words to David were wise and insightful (1 Sam. 25:23-31). The Bible does not condemn her as a non-submissive woman. As a matter of fact, David even acknowledged her as a messenger sent from God to keep him from bloodshed and revenge (1 Sam. 25:32).

Rahab was another woman who demonstrated her courage for the Lord. At the time the Israelites were about to enter the Land of Canaan, two spies were sent to look over the land (Jos. 2:1). When the messenger from the King of Jericho reached Rahab for these two spies, she showed her decisiveness, trustworthiness, independence, diplomacy and courage (Jos. 2:4-21). Risking her life, she hid the spies and guided the messenger a wrong direction. Both Abigail and Rahab demonstrated some masculine traits.

Nevertheless, there are also godly men with presumed feminine traits. Jacob was quiet and domestic. *“The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents”* (Gen. 25:27). He was also penny-pinching and insecure. He calculated his reward carefully before he offered any labor. He made sure he would gain the birth right from Esau before the stew was bestowed. He employed craftiness to possess the strong flock from his father-in-law Laban (Gen. 30:37-43). He also enjoyed cooking (Gen. 25:29). Quietness, domesticity, triviality, insecurity and love of cooking are many times regarded as feminine traits. David was musical and emotional. He played the harp well (1 Sam. 16:18) and he wrote many passionate psalms with intense emotions.⁷¹ Jeremiah also wrote scores of poetry with strong emotions. *“Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears. I would weep day and night for the slain of my people”* (Jer. 9:1). He, as well as many other prophets, was artistic, compassionate, sentimental and sensitive. Such character traits are believed to be feminine character traits. When Paul was first converted, Barnabas was the only one who welcomed him and brought him to the apostles (Acts 9:16). However, when Paul did not think it wise to take Mark in his mission trip, Barnabas was the one who accepted Mark (Acts 15:36-40) and restored him for later service (2 Tim. 4:11). Barnabas was gentle, kind, compassionate and supportive. He possessed the typical feminine features. All these men did not seem to suffer from gender confusion. As a matter of fact, David’s passion and his talent in music has been beneficial for the generations to come. Barnabas’ gentleness and kindness also profit Paul and Mark, and the kingdom of God.

⁷¹ Many of David’s psalms help people in the relief of the emotional distress.

According to the biblical description, Jesus not merely displays many masculine character traits, he also demonstrates a number of feminine traits. He is quiet, gentle, patient and kind. *“He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope”* (Isa. 42:2-4). He is quiet, patient and submissive. *“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth”* (Isa. 53:7). He is humble and submissive. *“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross”* (Phi. 2:8). He himself said *“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matt. 11:29). Jesus is quiet, gentle, patient, kind, submissive and humble, which are associated with feminine qualities. When God created man and woman, they both were created in His image (Gen. 1:27). According to the Bible, there are no dichotomous masculine or feminine traits. There are only godly or ungodly characters. Both men and women are to nurture godly characters. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) is the same for both men and women. Submissiveness is a godly character for both men and women (Eph. 5:21) to nurture. It is not designated for women only. Jesus also had to learn this from what he suffered (Heb. 5:8).

II. Gender Dichotomy in Roles:

The roles assigned to the first couple God created, the man as well as the woman, were first described in the Bible before any human culture and before the Fall: “*Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground*” (Gen. 1:28).⁷² These assignments included domestic private roles (“be fruitful, increase in number and fill the earth”) and outward public roles (“subdue the earth and rule over the fish of the sea ...”). The assignments of both the private nurture roles and the public provision roles were given to the man and the woman together with no distinction. Since these assignments were given with no distinction, God left the role assignment for man and woman to decide.

In the account of Genesis, God consigned both the domestic private chore and the outward public venture to both man and woman without allocating a specific assignment to each. However, when Adam and Eve fell, God placed the hardship of domestic struggles onto Eve and the adversity of outward distress onto Adam (Gen. 3:16-10). Women therefore are prone to be troubled by household predicaments while men are inclined to be concentrated in vocational competition. Later on Sarah and Hagar were rivals over child-bearing, (Gen. 16:5) Rebekah suffered from in-law conflicts (Gen. 27:46-47), and Leah and Rachel contested over their husband Jacob (Gen. 29:30-30:24). While Abraham’s herdsmen and Lot’s herdsmen quarreled for the land (Gen. 13:6-7), herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen for water (Gen. 26:20), and Jacob tussled with his father-in-law Laban for his wage (Gen. 30:28-43). Because of the

⁷² These commandments were given to both the man and the woman. Gen. 1:26-29.

curses, inward domestic affairs more and more occupied women's heart while outward provision tasks more and more became men's concern.

As people multiplied, numbers of roles emerged. For example, Cain played a role of a farmer and Abel played a role of a shepherd (Gen. 4:2). Later on Sarah played a role of domesticity (Gen. 18:6), Esau played a role of hunter, Jacob played a role of domesticity (Gen. 25:27, 29), and Rachel played a role of a shepherd (Gen. 29:6), Zipporah and her sisters played the role of shepherds (Exo. 2:16), and thus Moses also became a shepherd (Exo. 3:1). Naboth had a vineyard (1 Kings 21:1), the woman of noble character planted a vineyard (Prov. 31:16), and the bride of Solomon also had a vineyard and worked in a vineyard (Songs. 1:6). There was no gender distinction in these working roles. Both men and women engaged in the domestic private roles and the outward provision roles with no distinction. God did not seem to favor either gender in playing any certain roles, nor did the Bible disapprove either gender in playing any particular role. Nevertheless, human discrimination started to emerge in the role play because of personal favoritism: *"The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Issac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob"* (Gen, 25:27-28). The father loved his son to engage in outward provision role while the mother preferred her child remaining domestic.

As human societies were established, roles became diversified. Generally speaking, there are two categories of roles- the domestic nurture roles and the outward

provision roles. The Book of Proverbs, the teachings of the wise, is filled with instructions in life skill. In the beginning of this book, there are tutelages for young men, *“Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching”* (Prov. 1:8). *“Because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in”* (Prov. 3:12). *“Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction; pay attention and gain understanding”* (Prov. 4:1). *“(My father) taught me and said, ‘Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live’”* (Prov. 4:4). *“My son, keep your father’s commands and do not forsake your mother’s teaching”* (Prov. 6:20). *“A wise son heeds his father’s instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke”* (Prov. 13:1). *“A fool spurns his father’s discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence”* (Prov. 15:5). *“Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old”* (Prov. 23:22). All these passages instruct young men to heed their fathers as well as their mothers. Basically, the first seven chapters in the Book of Proverbs are teachings of a father to his son. Domestic nurture roles are carried out by both the father and the mother with no distinction, they are not limited to women only. Young men are taught to heed their fathers as well as their mothers. In the Book of Proverbs, there is no gender distinction in the domestic nurture role play.

Proverbs 31, the tutelage of a king from his mother, depicts a full scope of the prototype of a noble woman. This noble woman engages in outward public provision enterprise: *“She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar”* (31:13-14). *“She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard”* (31:16). *“She sees that her trading*

is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night” (31:18). *“She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes”* (31:24). This noble woman also performs domestic nurture responsibilities: *“She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls”* (31:15). *“In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers”* (31:19). *“When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple”* (31:21-22). *“She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness”* (31:27). This ideal woman undertakes the domestic nurture roles as well as the outward provision roles while *“Her husband is respected at the city gate where he takes the seat among the elders of the land”* (Prov. 31:23).⁷³ A woman engaging in provision roles is not a sign of male weakness but a symbol of male confidence. This is the prototype of a godly woman taught and recited from generation to generation. In the Book of Proverbs, there is no gender distinction in either the private domestic nurture roles or the outward public provision roles.

In the New Testament era, Lydia was a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira (Acts 16:14). There were also Mary (called Magdalene), Joanna, the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household, Susanna, and many other women who helped

⁷³ John Piper and Wayne Grudem assert that women can undertake the public provision roles only when the husbands are absent or not able. *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991) 31. This noble woman in Proverb 31 undertakes provision roles when her husband is present and able. He actually is a man of honor. However, John Piper and Wayne Grudem’s assertion has been modified in the past ten years. Wayne Grudem in his *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004) 60, ascribes provision roles to the husband as his “primary” responsibility and the nurture roles to the wife as her “primary” responsibility. And “both often willingly help the other person with his or her area of primary responsibility.” In other words, Wayne Grudem does not insist gender dichotomy in nurture or provision roles any more. The only subject he avers now is gender dichotomy in leadership positions.

to support Jesus and his disciples out of their own means (Luke 8:2-3). Paul was a tent-maker, Aquila was a tent-maker, and so was Priscilla (Acts. 18:3). According to the biblical account, throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, women were not forbidden to assume public provision roles. Jesus even encouraged Martha (Luke 10:41-42), as well as Mary, to sit at his feet and learn from him (Luke 10:39).⁷⁴ He did not confine women to domestic nurture roles.

III. Gender Problem in Leadership Positions:

As nations arose, leadership roles became essential and prominent. God appointed his leaders Moses, Joshua, Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah and the other Judges. Among them there was a female leader Deborah⁷⁵ as well as male leaders. They were raised up as deliverers or conquerors when the Israelites cried out to the Lord because of the oppression from the other nations (Exo. 3:9-10, Jos. 1:2, Judges 3:8-9, 15, 31, 4:3-4). God brought up a woman (Deborah) as well as men who assumed leadership roles in his kingdom.⁷⁶ God did not discriminate against women in assuming leadership position. However, due to the prominence and power ingrained in the

⁷⁴ Sitting at someone's feet in the first century means to be his disciple. Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books/Zondervan, 1987) 26. Jesus not merely permitted Mary to sit at his feet and be his disciple, he also challenged Martha to choose this stance rather than being consumed by her traditional woman's domestic cooking role.

⁷⁵ Wayne Grudem ascribes Deborah as a "private" judge who performs her judgment under a private setting. *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004) 133. Judicial affairs can never be "private". People are seeking justice and want to see justice. Deborah is a publicly acknowledged judge.

⁷⁶ Wayne Grudem refers the rise of Deborah as a result of male inadequacy. *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004) 134. Such advocate is not justifiable. According to the biblical description, even though Barak was once hesitated, he was still responsible, courageous, faithful, and vigorous. He was a much better leader than the other judges, such as Abimelech and Samson; or kings to come, such as Ahaz and Manasseh. If female leadership is a result of male inadequacy, there would have been female leadership most of the time throughout the history of the Southern Kingdom, and all the time in the history of the Northern Kingdom.

leadership position, little by little it became a game for men to fight for (Judges 9:2). Abimelech obtained his leadership position through violence (Judges 9:4-5). The leadership role also became hereditary. It was succeeded by the male heir only (Judges 9:1-2).

As the Israelites demanded a king imitating other nations, the role of a king became more and more a championship for men to fight for. Women were generally discriminated from this role as a result. King Saul exerted great human effort to sustain his kingship. He requested Samuel to honor him before the elders and the Israelites (1 Sam. 15:30). With such eager intention, he tore off the hem of Samuel's robe (1 Sam. 15:27). Later on he even attempted to kill David in order to sustain this kingship (1 Sam. 18:8-9). At David's reign, Absalom conspired to usurp the role of the king (2 Sam. 15:10). Adonijah also made an attempt to become king when his father was old (1 Kings 1:5). A leadership position signaled power. Slowly human effort more and more replaced the appointment of the Lord. At the epoch of the Kingdoms, violence was often employed to attain a royal position.⁷⁷ Violence characterized both the Northern and Southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The role of the king became a privilege for men only. Women were therefore excluded from this role. Only the wicked women such as Jezebel (1 Kings 21:5-16) and Athaliah (2 Kings 11:1-20) would fight with men for this power. Human society fell into the mode of dominance-oppression.

⁷⁷ In approximately two hundred and ten years, the Northern Kingdom went through twenty rulers and nine dynasties.

However, even in a world dominated by men, God still raised up women leaders. Miriam was a prophetess (Exo. 15:20). The wife of the Prophet Isaiah was also a prophetess (Isa. 8:3). At the time of King Josiah, Huldah was a prophetess (2 Kings 22:14). Prominent leaders came to her in one accord seeking guidance. She gave godly advice to the king. She was a leader of the leaders⁷⁸. Even though the Old Testament times were characterized by dominance and oppression, God raised women leaders in the era of the Patriarchs, the time of the Judges and the epoch of the Kings. According to the biblical account, women in leadership positions are not forbidden by the Lord.

In the New Testament times, there were also a number of women leaders. There were four daughters of Philip the evangelist, who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9). There was also Phoebe, who was a deaconess of the church in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1). Phoebe carried the epistle to the Roman church just as Tychicus to Ephesus (Eph. 6:21, Col. 4:7) and Onesimus to Colosse (Col. 4:9, Phm.10-12). They were all representatives for Paul. Aristobulus was a leader of a household church (Rom. 16:10), Narcissus was a leader of a household church (Rom. 16:11), Philemon was a leader of a household church (Phi. 1), so were Lydia (Acts 16:13-15, 40), Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11) and Nympha (Col. 4:15).

⁷⁸ Many complementarians regard men led by a woman as a sign of crumbled male leadership. However, in this account, consulting a prophetess results in spiritual revival. God does not seem to be enraged, nor does the Bible condemn any man involved. Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achor, Shaphan, Asiah together with King Josiah are godly men and capable leaders. Consulting a woman is not a sign of crumbled male leadership, it is a sign of unity- men and women working together in the kingdom of God. Wayne Grudem also ascribes this account as a private act rather than a public leading. See *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004) 138. Therefore, Huldah was not a public leader. She merely gave her advice under a private setting. Nevertheless, all church or denomination decisions are made under private settings rather than public polls. Therefore, women shall not be discriminated from the decision making process done under private settings. As a matter of fact, practically all important issues are determined under private settings rather than public polls. David allowed Absalom to return to Jerusalem under private setting (2 Sam. 14:1-24). Later on he chose his successor Solomon under private setting (1 King 1:29-30). Rehoboam determined what to answer to the Israelites under private settings (1 Kings 12:6-11)... A leader under private settings is a true leader.

Priscilla, together with her husband Aquila, was also a house church leader (Rom. 16:3-5, 1 Cor. 16:19). Paul called Aquila (Rom. 16:3), Urbanus (Rom. 16:9) and Timothy (Rom. 16:21) his fellow-workers. He did the same for women for he also called Priscilla (Rom. 16:3), Euodia and Syntyche (Phi. 4:3) as such. Paul was an apostle, Peter was an apostle, Andronicus was an outstanding apostle, and so was Junias (Rom. 16:7).⁷⁹ They all have been in prison for the sake of the gospel. In the first century, churches were established by women as well as by men. The church in Philippi was related to Lydia and many other women who gathered by the river praying.⁸⁰ The church in Thessalonica was inevitably linked with a number of prominent women (Acts 17:4). In the first century, women worked side by side with men in all spheres of gospel work. Shared ministry of husband and wife was a common phenomenon (1 Cor. 9:5).⁸¹ Out of the thirty-five people Paul greeted in the book of Romans, eleven were women (Rom. 16:3-24). Usually those people greeted by Paul at the end of the epistles were church leaders. According to the biblical account, women have been in leadership positions throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. They were not condemned nor criticized by God or contemporary saints.

⁷⁹ There have been arguments regarding the gender of the Greek name *Iounian*. This accusative form could indicate either the feminine name Junia or the masculine name Junias. However, arguments have been advanced to favor the feminine. See Ray R. Schulz, "Romans 16:7: Junia or Junias?" *Expository Times* 98 (1987) 108-110. Many even believe that Andronicus and Junia are husband and wife. Complementarians also argue that "They are outstanding among the apostles" may not necessarily mean they are apostles. It may mean that they are outstanding in the sight of the apostles. This advocate is not generally accepted.

⁸⁰ The narratives in Acts 16:13-14 and Phil. 4:2-3 bear witness that the church at Philippi was established because God opened the heart of a woman named Lydia and a number of other women who met together praying. Euodia and Syntyche were two other women within the church fellowship who had been co-workers with Paul in the enterprise of the gospel.

⁸¹ It is believed that Peter's wife was also crucified upside down with him. They both engaged in the enterprise of the gospel. Aquila and Priscilla were husband and wife. Andronicus and Junia were also possibly husband and wife.

IV. The Role of Culture in Biblical Teaching:

Many times when God conveys his commands, he delivers only the ultimate destination without dictating the practical details. The greatest commandment in the Law is *“to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”* (Matt. 22:37). At the time of King Ahab, this indicates that knees should not bow down to Baal nor should mouths kiss him (1 Kings 19:18). At the time of Haggai, this denotes rebuilding of the temple (Hag. 1:4). To King Saul, this signifies not to spare Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs- everything that is good (1 Sam. 15:9). To a poor widow, this means two very small copper coins (Mark 12:41-44). To a sinner, this designates repentance (Luke 7:36-50). To Peter, this refers to taking care of and feeding the sheep (John 21:15-17). To a man who relies on self effort, this implies impossibility- to give everything to the poor and to follow Jesus (Mark 10:13-16). The practical manner in the fulfillment of the commandment vary from time to time and from person to person.

When the Prophet Micah proclaimed the commands of the Lord, he said, *“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”* (Mic. 6:8). However, the Prophet Micah never further explained to people what to do to fulfill the commandment of “to act justly”, what it meant “to love mercy” or how to “walk humbly with your Lord”. However, when John the Baptist was in the wilderness preaching repentance, he further elucidated the decree of the Lord: *“The man with two tunics should share with*

him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same” (Luke 3:11). To the tax-collectors he said, *“Don’t collect any more than you are required to”* (Luke 3:13). To the soldiers he said, *“Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely- be content with your pay”* (Luke 3:14b). John the Baptist illustrated the will of the Lord well. He did it in the context of his culture. The fulfillment of God’s commandments, as a matter of fact, can not be disentangled from human culture.

Obedience toward the Lord in the Old Testament often means annihilating the enemy. *“When the Lord your God delivers it (the city) into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it”* (Deut. 20:13) and *“In the city of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes”* (Deut. 20:16). To the first century slaves, it means not to be troubled by the pursuit of freedom (1 Cor. 7:20-21) and to serve and obey their masters as serving and obeying the Lord. (Eph. 6:5-8, Col. 22-23) To the first century women, it means covering the head (1 Cor. 11:3-15), being silent (1 Cor. 14:34-36) being submissive to husbands, not to rule over or teach men, nor to preach (Eph. 5:22-24, Col. 3:18, 1 Tim. 2:11-14). However, through the centuries, many of such practices have changed.⁸² Death or destruction has to be minimized and avoided as much as possible during the war. Excessive killing and destruction is considered inhumane and malicious. Biblical commands of annihilation many times arouse doubt and dissension. Slavery is also heeded as evil even though the

⁸² William J. Webb in his *Slave, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2001) 14-15, lists a number of biblical commands. Some are aborted with no dispute, not even with much of people’s awareness, some are still in practice with no arguments. However, there are others questionable and controversial.

Bible is filled with teachings concerning slavery.⁸³ Regarding the women's issues, the head-covering is no longer observed by the majority without much dispute, woman's silence is partially abandoned with little argument, while woman's submission and the prohibition of woman in leadership positions are fervently debated even though Paul refers all three categories of teachings to the creation order in the same manners (1 Cor. 8-12, 1 Tim. 2:13). Woman's issues do not seem to be merely woman's issues. They are, as a matter of fact, issues of male power. The woman's issues not affecting male power, such as the head-covering, can be regarded as a cultural matter with little argument.⁸⁴ However, woman's issues affecting male power, such as woman's silence, submission, not to teach or rule over men; can not be deemed as cultural subjects by complementarians. To them, male power has to be maintained regardless. Fervent debates therefore continue. Up to now, churches have not arrived at any clear consensus in these debates.⁸⁵ Each church or denomination has to come up with her own ordinance regarding women in ministry.

The Scripture is not composed for the purpose of constructing a sociological community for the people of God to inhabit from generation to generation without

⁸³ Many prominent theologians took the stand of anti-abolition during the antislavery movement. They believed slavery was God's ordination. Charles Hodge, the great Princeton theologian, stated that, "If the present course of the abolitionists is right, then the course of Christ and the apostles were wrong."

⁸⁴ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Discovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991) 75. The authors refer the head-covering issue to a matter of "culturally appropriate expressions of masculinity and femininity." In this sense, woman's silence and submission shall also be alluded to "a culturally appropriate expressions of male and female relationship". In a world of equity, stress of male authority is not culturally appropriate.

⁸⁵ As Wayne Grudem states in his *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004) 51, the egalitarians have not had any new breakthroughs, any new discoveries that lend substantial strength to their position. The same is also true for the complementarians, except that the complementarians did make some modifications.

change. Nor is it to dictate the outward conduct codes for the people of God to emulate from generation to generation without change.⁸⁶ The task of exegesis is to bring to light the original intent of the words of the Bible.⁸⁷ This is a difficult task. Dealing with all the passages regarding women, it is essential to raise the question if Paul's intent is woman's godliness or woman's subordination. As Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson stated well in their *Who Needs Theology*, "...theology is never the product of Scripture alone. The goal of theological construction is not merely to say what the Bible says. Rather, our task is to construct biblical truth in a specific context.. Our theology must be contextually constructive.." ⁸⁸ As the world entered the third millennium, woman's godliness may be quite different from what was described two thousand years ago. As Sherwood Lingenfelter stated well in "*Gender Roles and Authority: A Comparative Socio-cultural Perspective*", Christians are not called to a biblical culture, but rather they are called to lives of pilgrimage.⁸⁹ The danger of creating a "biblical culture" is idolatry, in which Christians trust such culture more than trusting the Lord.

⁸⁶ Jesus many times is the one violating the tradition. He talks to women, sinful women. He does not observe Sabbath in a literal way. Nor does he perform the ritual of washing hands outwardly.

⁸⁷ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993) 23.

⁸⁸ Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Who Needs Theology: An Invitation to the Study of Go*. (Downers Grove IL: Intervarsity, 1995) 106.

⁸⁹ Robert L. Saucy and Judith K. TenElshof, *Women and Men in Ministry* (Chicago: Moody, 2001) 272.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's issue is no longer a neglected issue, especially in the recent fifty years. Women, the majority who used to be silent and invisible in the society, is no longer silent or invisible. As M. Gay Hubbard noted, the number of women working outside the home has been doubled, tripled and increased 129 percents in the past decades.⁹⁰ Women's contribution outside the family is acknowledged more and more. Nowadays, some women still assume the traditional roles as home-makers while others take up the conventional masculine responsibilities outside the family. Some of them in both groups are confident in the roles they undertake while others are confused. Gender-roles distinction is not crystal clear any more. With increased women's participation in practically all spheres of life, conservative churches still regard the reservation of some positions for men only as faithfulness toward God. What does the Bible say about this? What kind of roles did women at biblical times assume? What have women been doing throughout the church history? How should a twenty-first century Christian regard the biblical commands given two millennia ago? This chapter will give a review of some books and articles which the author find interesting and valuable to this topic. Through these books and articles, readers may obtain a thorough view concerning this issue.

⁹⁰ M. Gay Hubbard, *Women, The Misunderstood Majority* (Irving, TX; Word, 1992) 190.

I. Women's Roles in the Bible:

Christians are the people of the Book. When dealing with any issue, Christians first try to find answer in the Bible. In *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*,⁹¹ James B. Hurley approaches the issue of women's roles not merely through the description of Biblical accounts, but also through the cross-examination of contemporary neighboring cultures: Babylonian and Assyrian cultures as comparisons to the Old Testament culture; and Judaism and Graeco-Roman cultures as comparisons to the New Testament culture. In the Old Testament times, it is patriarchal in general in all three cultures. Women are not intrinsically inferior but situational subordinate to men.⁹² In the New Testament times, Jesus did not mention male headship or authority in any occasion. Both men and women followed him. However, the twelve apostles he appointed were all men. Nevertheless, the gospel was spread regardless of the structure of "office" or "authority".⁹³ According to the teachings of Apostle Paul, James B. Hurley believes that men's authority over women was given before the fall⁹⁴

⁹¹ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981).

⁹² James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981) 56-57.

⁹³ Ibid., 112.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 220. Men's authority over women is described in chapter two of Genesis, prior to the Fall account in chapter three.

and therefore, it has to be heeded throughout the times. He also advocates that the office of elder should be restricted to men only.⁹⁵

Mary Evans also cross-examined women's roles in the Bible in comparison with the contemporary neighboring cultures. However, she has a different view from James B. Hurley. She also refers the Old Testament times as intensely androcentric. Nevertheless, even during those male-centered times, God intentionally appointed women as leaders as well as mothers, such as Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah.⁹⁶ This is not for the purpose to disgrace men, as the conservatives claim, at least not during King Josiah's time.⁹⁷ In the New Testament time, unlike the contemporary Graeco-Roman culture, Jesus did not hold any different attitude toward men and women. The passages that Paul wrote to prohibit women from certain positions are for individual cases rather than general rules.⁹⁸ Unqualified women should be excluded from the teaching positions and women are to operate under the authority of the church. Moreover, during the first century, women played a major role in leadership along with men.⁹⁹ There was a woman apostle Junia, possibly women elders and bishops, and for sure women deacons and teachers. Mary Evans, therefore, draws the conclusion that men and women should work together in the church in diversity, unity,

⁹⁵ Ibid., 233.

⁹⁶ Mary Evans, *Woman in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1983) 32.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 30-31.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 108-113.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 123-130.

and complementarity.¹⁰⁰ Reading books with distinctive perspectives, readers have to use their own judgment in assessing this issue.

Similar work is done by Linda L. Belleville in her *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions*.¹⁰¹ She concludes that Jewish women had no restriction in the roles they assumed until the late first century A.D. as a reaction to the rapidly developing freedoms of women in Hellenistic and Roman times.¹⁰² She has not found evidence in the prohibition of Jewish women in teaching even though it has been commonly stated by the modern scholars. Linda L. Belleville also refers authority to the empowerment to do the work of ministry and to be a servant of the church rather than having the power to rule or to govern. Authority to rule or to govern is seen only in the secular world.¹⁰³

With practically no theological debate, Alice Mathews highlights the women God has created and has used during biblical times in *A Woman God Can Lead*.¹⁰⁴ They vary from the gentle and kind Ruth to the courageous and ambitious Deborah, from the submissive and passive Esther to the wise and decisive Abigail, from the family-oriented Leah to the business-minded noble woman in Proverb, from the quiet private

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 132.

¹⁰¹ Linda L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999).

¹⁰² Ibid., 21.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 134-135.

¹⁰⁴ Alice P. Mathews, *A Woman God Can Lead* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 1998).

Hannah to the public out-spoken Huldah and Miriam, and from the cooking Martha to the learning Mary. These women vary both in personalities and in roles they have assumed. However, they are all God's creation and His servants. Some of them possess the typical traditional feminine characters while others do not. Some of them take up the traditional women's roles while others do not. Nevertheless, they are all God's design for his special purposes. The Bible does not seem to favor a certain kind of women over the other, nor does the Bible disapprove either kind. This book offers an honest assessment in the various lives the biblical women have lived. God creates women in variation and he loves each one of them in her own unique way. This book encourages women to live out the unique and various lives that God intends for them to live.

II. Women's Contributions in Church History:

When talking about any issue, it is always good to refer back to history. This is also true in women's issues. Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld compiled a wonderful collection of female Christian stories in their *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present*.¹⁰⁵ As one reads through this five-hundred-plus page book, one will inevitably be astounded by one's ignorance in women ministers, women missionaries or women martyrs. Throughout the history, God has raised a number of women who dedicated their lives to God as completely as men. With tremendous courage and decisiveness, they walked out of their conventional roles in the comfort home to serve the God they loved. Regardless how conservative the society has

¹⁰⁵ Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987).

been, serving God whole-heartedly was not a privilege possessed by men only. Most of these women are not well-acknowledged by the general public. However, God remembers them. This book is an eye-opening book. It does not merely tell stories of many godly women in the history, it also offers the pieces which have been missing all along from the awareness of many believers.

The contribution of women in the mission field is never in doubt. Nevertheless, they are recognized as “woman missionaries” as a whole. The great majority of them are not personally acknowledged as individuals. Dana L. Robert has a good collection of women in American mission history in her *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice*.¹⁰⁶ They are missionary wives, woman missionaries, and missionary teachers. These godly women responded to God’s calling and walked out from the traditional women’s roles. The mission field is always a place where women can possibly exert all their gifts and fully fulfill their callings. This book may open the mind of some women who have only the family and children in their concern. It also offers some alternative roles for women besides the traditional home-making functions.

Catherine A. Berkus has a good collection of women preachers in American history in her *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America*.¹⁰⁷ So does Mary

¹⁰⁶ Dana L. Roberts, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁷ Catherine A. Berkus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America*, (Chapel Hill, NC: U. of North Carolina Press, 1998).

Beth Norton in her *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women 1750-1800*.¹⁰⁸ These female preachers and leaders were greatly criticized and persecuted by their contemporaries. Were they wicked women who rebelled against male authorities or were they godly women simply living out what God has intended for them to live out? Some of these women abandoned their families and children in order to serve God. Were they truly responding to God's calling or were they merely "outrageous"? The readers may use the best of their judgment in reading these sources, yet leave room for doubt and proof later.

III. Theological Debates:

One may find it interesting to hear debates of different perspectives. Generally speaking, there are two Christian camps debating women's stance at home and in the church: the complementarian and the egalitarian. Both camps are supported by God-loving believers and both camps hold the Bible as inerrant and the final authority. Complementarians follow the literal commands of Pauline teaching while egalitarians pursue the full exercise of women's spiritual gifts. Both camps believe that man and woman are ontologically and eschatologically equal: man and woman both bear the image of God and are equal in salvation and in value. In between, however, complementarians prescribe hierarchy in gender relationships while egalitarians advocate equality. They also differ on exegesis,¹⁰⁹ the extent of weight they put on the

¹⁰⁸ Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Woman 1750-1800* (Ithaca and London: Cornell U. Press, 1980).

¹⁰⁹ The major disputes are the exegesis of head- *kephale* (Eph. 5:23). Complementarians interpret it as "authority" while egalitarians translate it as "source". They also debate in the exegesis of woman not to have "authority" over man (1 Tim. 2:12) and believers should "submit" to each other (Eph. 5:21). There are other arguments, such as what types of work those women performed whom Paul mentioned in the epistles. Complementarians attribute the work those women performed as traditional feminine supportive

cultural context of the Scripture,¹¹⁰ and the parts of the Scripture they focus on.¹¹¹ The Scripture seems to speak for both perspectives. The apostle Paul is described as hierarchical by complementarians while the same Paul is pictured as an equal-right advocate by egalitarians.

Numerous articles from each camp have emanated in an attempt to settle the disputes. Currently, fervent debates still go on and new nuances keep coming forth. However, as Wayne Grudem noticed, there is no break-through.¹¹² Living in the Twenty-First Century, it is impossible for any Christian to be unaware of this impasse. Nevertheless, the majority at large may not be acquainted with the very contents. Generally speaking, egalitarians' approaches in advocating gender equity vary greatly. Some argue the exegesis of *kephale* and other related words and passages. Some extensively study the roles which the biblical women, the Old Testament women, and the New Testament women, have assumed. Others even go beyond the literal exegesis and the biblical description by projecting to the eschaton. They discuss what the relationship of men and women shall be like in the Kingdom of God eschatologically. Accordingly, nowadays Christian men and women are to head forward.

tasks while egalitarians ascribe them as public leading positions. Complementarians describe Miriam's leadership role as for women only while egalitarians believe her, together with Moses and Aaron, as leaders for the whole Israelites.

¹¹⁰ Complementarians take Pauline teachings regarding women as transcultural while egalitarians believe them as for contemporary situations only.

¹¹¹ Complementarians focus on what roles women can not play while egalitarians highlight what roles women have played in the Bible.

¹¹² Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah) 51. Wayne Grudem states that there is no break-through from the egalitarian camp. However, there is actually no conclusive break-through from either camp, the complementarian or the egalitarian.

In contrast to the egalitarians, the arguments of the complementarians are somewhat uniform. They follow the traditional literal interpretation of Pauline teachings. However, the extent they exert on “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (1 Tim. 2:12) varies in quite a range. Some (the hard hierarchy) restrict women from all teaching positions, including the Sunday school teaching and particularly the pastoral and the elder positions; while others (the soft hierarchy) withhold only the senior pastor’s and the elder’s positions from women. In responding to the egalitarians, they claim the roles which the women mentioned in the Bible have assumed as private supportive roles rather than public leading roles.

A. The Advocate of Traditional Women’s Roles:

John Piper and Wayne Grudem presents a clear picture of men and women working together in distinctive roles in their *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*.¹¹³ They advocate gender dichotomy: men and women have to be remarkably different, in character and in roles at home and in church. This distinction has to be taught to sons and daughters from their childhood on. Men have to be brave, decisive, responsible, strong and independent. They support the family through toil and labor. Women are to be quiet, humble, submissive and gentle. They take care of children, the elderly and house chores. Men hold all the responsibilities of the whole household, financially, psychologically as well as spiritually. Women are in complete dependence of men. When men are absent, however, women are to take up both men’s and women’s responsibilities. Women then

¹¹³ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991).

become the head of the house. They have to be decisive, courageous, independent and strong. Nevertheless, once men come back home, women are to surrender all the authorities, responsibilities and respect back to men.¹¹⁴ They then have to resume their quietness, submissiveness, humility and dependence.

Echoing John Piper and Wayne Grudem's description of women's submissive roles at home, Thomas R. Schreiner in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* advocates the similar women's submissive roles in the mission field. He believes it is biblical for woman missionaries to minister and preach the gospel in the mission field. However, once the church organization is established in such a mission field, men are to take over and lead. Woman missionaries are to surrender all the authorities and offices to men. They are not to have any official title in such church.¹¹⁵ He also refers the Apostle Junia as a missionary who approached women in mission field.¹¹⁶ Moreover, Thomas R. Schreiner does not consider the issue of women's roles as an important issue within evangelicalism today, at least not as important as the controversy of openness of God, and inclusivism versus exclusivism.¹¹⁷

It is interesting to understand what complementarian women assert and how they live out their assertion in their real lives. In *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, the woman complementarian Ann L. Bowman's view is quite different from the man

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 31.

¹¹⁵ James R. Beck and Craig L. Bloomberg, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001) 200.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 199.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 177.

complementarian Thomas R. Schreiner. Ann L. Bowman narrates God's calling, ministry, gifts, as well as her personal experience rather than exerting theological debates.¹¹⁸ Being a Bible teacher, she takes the soft hierarchy stand and believes it to be right for women to do all things except assuming the senior pastor's position. Woman complementarians usually recount their perspectives in a narrative way rather than an argumentative way. The narration is often interwoven with their own personal experience.

Dorothy Patterson in *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* upholds the importance of a full time mother. However, she herself was not a full time mother.¹¹⁹ Susan Foh in *Women in Ministry- Four Views* takes a rather strong hierarchy stand. She forbids women from assuming pastoral or elder positions and believes women are not even to be preachers of the gospel. She uses Elizabeth Elliot as an example who taught a local man to preach the gospel for her in the mission field when there was no man available. Being a Sunday school teacher, Susan Foh believes it is all right for women to teach adult Sunday school since she does not consider adult Sunday school as a part of the Sunday worship. Often times, woman complementarians' views are greatly shaped by and swirled around their own personal career and experience.

In the new publication *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth*,¹²⁰ Wayne Grudem takes a softer stand in women's roles in family. In this new publication,

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 239-299.

¹¹⁹ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991) 364.

¹²⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004).

complementarians also object to gender stereotype and come to the realization that some women can be more “masculine” than some men.¹²¹ They are now taking the stand of the “complementarian middle” in which man’s roles and woman’s roles are not distinctively different. Each one of them has his/her “primary” responsibilities and each one is willing to help the other person in his/her primary area. However, Wayne Grudem still holds a strong conservative stance toward women’s roles in church.

Women and Men in Ministry,¹²² co-edited by Robert L. Saucy and Judith K. TenElshof, is an advanced complementarian book. Described from a complementarian’s perspective, the outlook of the husband and wife relationship at home actually is no different from what is sketched from the egalitarian’s perspective. Mutual subjection is a fundamental attitude of “humanity of mind” for both man and woman, which is personally demonstrated by Paul.¹²³ Robert Saucy and Clinton Arnold also object to hierarchical authority of man over woman.¹²⁴ They believe love is the only ground for the man and woman relationship.¹²⁵ Imposition of hierarchy in gender is by no means God’s intent. In these two new publications, the gap between egalitarians and complementarians is becoming narrower.

B. The Advocate of Non-traditional Women’s Roles:

¹²¹ Ibid., 72.

¹²² Robert L. Saucy and Judith K. TenElshof, *Women and Men in Ministry* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2001).

¹²³ Ibid., 121.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 131.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 132.

Different from all other feminists, the Biblical Feminists hold the Bible as their final authority and inerrant. They believe if the Bible is interpreted in the right way, it should embrace gender equity.¹²⁶ Therefore, egalitarians have been exerting great efforts in finding alternative exegesis for Pauline teachings regarding women's issues. Catherine Clark Kroeger in the appendix of *Equal to Serve*¹²⁷ interprets *kephale* as "source" rather than "authority". Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen have also found varieties of meanings for *kephale*¹²⁸: source, beginning or completion, source of life, superior rank, top or crown, derivation, enabler, etc. Aida Spencer in *Beyond the Curse*¹²⁹ reads Pauline teaching in 1 Timothy 2 as an encouragement for women pursuing education, and after being educated, women may teach men. Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger have searched various meanings of *authenthein* and give a new exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in *I Suffer Not a Woman*.¹³⁰ They translate Paul's teaching as a prohibition against a monopoly on religious power by women. Such a monopolistic attitude in the church is wrong, whether arrogated to themselves by men or women.¹³¹ They also interpret 1 Timothy 2:12 as "I do not allow a woman to teach nor to proclaim herself author of man."¹³² Often times, egalitarians hold Gal. 3:28

¹²⁶ Jack Cottrell, *Gender Roles and the Bible: Creation, the Fall, and Redemption* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1994) 18.

¹²⁷ Gretchen Gaebelin Hull, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell Publish, 1987) Appendix III.

¹²⁸ Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, "The Head of the Epistles," *Christianity Today* (Feb. 1981).

¹²⁹ Aida Besancon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985).

¹³⁰ Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Kroeger, *I Suffer not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 103.

as their ground for equity¹³³: “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” Stanley J. Grenz in his *Women in the Church*¹³⁴ takes this equity as social equality. However, complementarians take this as equality in soteriological position rather than soteriological function.

Gilbert Bilezikian has a picture of an ideal Christian community in mind where there is no discrimination in gender, race, or sociological class. He depicts this Utopia well in his *Beyond Sex Roles*¹³⁵ and *Community 101*.¹³⁶ Both Christians and the rest of the world must admit that this picture is an idealistic state where sin does not operate. Bilezikian takes hierarchy as a sign of regression, the regression from the normative model of church ministry- the oneness, full-participated and gift-based ministry- to the remedial model of church ministry- the functionary type and staff-driven ministries,¹³⁷ the regression from a polity that required leaders to equip, support, and facilitate congregation-based ministries to a system that required leaders to take over ministries; and the regression from support roles of leaders as coaches and tutors to Old Testament patterns of leader monopoly on ministry.¹³⁸ The cause of this shift in the ministry models, according to Bilezikian, was mainly the heresy lit by false teachers. Church history somehow echoes Bilezikian’s claim. It is a common phenomenon that women

¹³³ Complementarians advocate creation order while egalitarians protest that such order does not exist any more in the re-creation in Jesus Christ.

¹³⁴ Stanley Grenz, *Women in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995).

¹³⁵ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985).

¹³⁶ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 82-103.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

take prominent stands during revivals. They prophesy, teach, preach, as well as lead. However, as these revivals go on, fake spirituality and false teaching emerge. Men therefore take over and organizations are then formed. Women together with false teachers are banned. It is worth to ponder which type of church is the spirit-led church: the Bilezikian-called normative model or the remedial model. Also, it is essential to define which type of ministries resemble the ministry of Jesus: the leader-as-servant type or the leader-as-commander type.

William Webb's *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*¹³⁹ is an inspirational book. He presents a nuance in hermeneutics, the redemptive-movement hermeneutics in contrast of the traditional static approach. The revelation of God cannot be isolated from human culture. Hermeneutics independent of contemporary culture does not make sense in any culture different from the Bible time. Complementarians often use the unethical homosexual issue as a ground to subjugate the insurgence of the ethical woman movement since both issues are hot debates nowadays and both groups are seeking recognition and equity. In William Webb's redemptive-movement hermeneutics, these two subjects are quite distinct. The Bible takes the stand in favor of slave and woman equity comparing with the contemporary social cultures. However, the Bible takes a firmer stand against homosexuality contrasting the concurrent secular world. The woman issue, therefore, can not be regarded in the same manner as the homosexual issue.

¹³⁹ William J. Webb, *Slave, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001).

In this same book, William Webb also raises many other challenges, such as the biblical instructions which are currently effective and the other instructions which are no longer in practice.¹⁴⁰ Christians are used to their customs and seldom raise the questions why some biblical instructions are still valid while others are ended without much awareness. Another challenge William Webb raises is the countercultural versus paracultural issues.¹⁴¹ Paul demonstrated both attitudes in dealing with various subjects. Generally speaking, Christians should take a counter cultural attitude toward moral issues which affect godliness. However, issues regarding human accustomed practices which are irrelevant to godliness should not be Christians' concern. Christians merely exhaust their time and energy in meaningless disputes. *Slave, Women & Homosexual* is a worth-reading book. It does not merely contribute a view regarding woman's issues but also brings up a dynamic approach in hermeneutics.

III. Summary:

As church history goes on, theological debates become more and more controversial and less and less conclusive. However, as children of God are humbly seeking answers from the Lord, they become mature and come to a better comprehension of God. Through the debates of the past fifty years, the gap between complementarians and egalitarians seem to become narrower. Serving and worshiping one God, being redeemed by and re-created in the same Jesus, and being inspired and empowered by one Spirit, the children of God shall not deviate too far away from the

¹⁴⁰ William J. Webb, *Slave, Women & Homosexual: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) 13-15.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

Truth. Up to now, even though there is still no conclusive resolution in women's issues, there is difference in complementarians' advocates. Many Christian women are struggling their way through in serving their God in submission. Without a clear fine line in what to do and what not to do, daughters of God serve their creator in awe and reverence. *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law"* (Deut. 29:29). Forever there will be issues ambiguous and incomprehensible. God allows these ambiguities so that his children may not replace Him with tangible rules.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT DESIGN

There are two projects conducted in this study. The first project is to identify the problems resulting from dichotomous cultural gender roles at home and in the church. The second project is to access one possible resolution for these problems.

The first project is carried out in the form of a questionnaire (appendix A). The questionnaires are distributed to brothers and sisters in a Chinese church, Rutgers Community Christian Church (RCCC) in New Jersey, USA and in house churches in Mainland China. Results are assessed based on gender, age, education background, years in Christ, etc. Outcomes from RCCC are evaluated as a contrast to those from churches in Mainland China. This contrast indicates the differences in culture and church teaching in North America and Mainland China. These two groups of people are all Chinese Christians. The only difference is that the first group Chinese have come to North America while the second group has remained in China. In other words, the only difference between these two groups is cultural church teaching. This survey was conducted from September 2005 to March 2006.

RCCC is a non-denominational community church in central New Jersey. She has a congregation slightly over two thousand. The main body of this church is the first

generation Chinese immigrants from Taiwan, China, and Hong-Kong. There are several purposes meant to be achieved in this questionnaire: what men and women believe the roles of women in the church and at home are, what roles men and women serve in the church, and if men and women feel they have fulfilled the calling from God.

After getting married, Chinese Christian women are taught to be quiet and obedient, verbally or non-verbally. They are generally bound in the kitchen and spend most of their time with children or the elderly in both the home and the church. Passivity is synonymous to godliness. Men are the heads who make decisions and are actively involved in church activities. After many years of the same routine in the small arena, the majority of women have lost their ability to think independently or to make decisions independently. Some of them enjoy the life with little responsibility while others carry the doubts of who they are and what they are for.

The second project is designed to train women with leadership potential to think independently and to help other women in thinking independently in their relationship with God and life issues. This project consists of a group of twenty-one people, the project designer and five woman leaders with two to four other women in each group. Not every woman can be a leader and not every woman is called to be a leader. Women should be free to be who they are called to be. After so many years of conservative teaching, the majority women in North American Chinese church do not feel comfortable to take challenge or to take charge. They feel safe in remaining passive. Nevertheless, there are a few women who have the incentive to step forward to learn

more and to serve God more. Five woman leaders are identified who have sufficient biblical knowledge, church recognition, and serving experience. This project lasts ten months, from September 2006 to June 2007. There are both large group meetings and small group meetings which are led by the small group leaders. The large group meets every other month and discusses five essential topics in life.¹⁴² Each of the five woman leaders has the opportunity to lead one of the large groups. In between large group meetings, there are three small group meetings where women discuss the more personal issues. These small groups meet every other week. Furthermore, there is also a leaders' meeting for support and evaluation. A questionnaire (appendix B) is filled out by each individual in the beginning and at the end of the project as an evaluation of their progress. The five woman leaders are also interviewed in the middle and at the end of the program for evaluation.

The essence of the second project is active subjective learning. Each member, especially the woman leaders, has to search for God and answers to life issues herself actively. She does not merely sit in the group and listen to lectures silently. This is very different from the traditional passive way of learning. Each one of them has to think through questions before group meetings and each one also has the opportunity to lead a small group discussion. The small group topics vary from group to group according to

¹⁴² The five large topics are: sovereignty of God, knowing the will of the Lord, personality and character, spiritual gifts and life, and women's roles.

the needs of each group.¹⁴³ The purpose of this project is to engage each woman in direct relationship with God and to encourage them to make life choices actively.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES

People tend to follow rules. Rules form a vivid external boundary. Often times, such a vivid external boundary offers people a sense of security. The success in observing rules, then, gives people a sense of righteousness. If observation of rules is the very thing that determines the spirituality of a believer, then the only difference between a traditionalist and a liberationist is the difference in the rules they follow.¹⁴⁴

However, God's Law is given with purposes. It is intrinsically holy (Rom. 7:12). It reveals the attributes of God. Observation of the Law reflects the inward relationship between a believer and his God. Nevertheless, cultural context has never stopped changing throughout the times, especially in the past few centuries. Out of the transcultural Law, people make up rules for their contemporary situations. In the New Testament time Jesus broke the Old Testament Jewish rules on many occasions and many times he gave the old traditions new dimensions.¹⁴⁵ Yet, he also insisted in

¹⁴³ These five groups have their own dynamics and uniqueness. One group is an empty-nested group. Their children are either in college or have graduated from college. The second group is consisted of mothers with teenagers. The third group is composed of children's Sunday school teachers. The fourth is a divorcees' group. And the last group is a group of wives of prominent leaders. Since each group has its own dynamics and uniqueness, their small group topics vary slightly. Nevertheless, all these topics are God-centered.

¹⁴⁴ Rose Marie Miller, *From Fear to Freedom: Living as Sons and Daughters of God* (Colorado Spring, CO: Shaw Books, 1994) 104.

¹⁴⁵ Luke 5:36-39. Jesus failed to observe Sabbath in many occasions. He also broke washing rituals, dined with sinners, chatted with a Samaritan woman and gave new meanings to many Jewish traditions

observing rules of the contemporary.¹⁴⁶ However, during the time of transition, people may become confused in what to change and what to follow. There are things that are clearly the will of the Lord, yet there are also things that are not so clear. This world has been changing in a more and more accelerated pace. Living in this ever-changing world, Christians must make a distinction between these two categories: what is clearly the will of the Lord and what is not. By doing so Christians will not become chaotic in what to follow and what to change.

Head coverings (1 Cor. 11:1-16), woman's silence (1 Cor. 14:34-36), woman's submission (1 Tim. 2:11), and the restrictions of woman in preaching and in having authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12) are all Pauline teachings. However, some of these restrictions have long been discontinued with little dissension while others are still enforced and incite a great volume of disputes. Christian women practice some of the teachings and deem such as woman's virtues and never raise the question why these are woman's virtues while others are not. Raising questions from a traditional view seems contentious. A traditional pious woman therefore does not raise questions. She simply does what she is told to do. Christian women, therefore, may possibly be following Church culture rather than the will of the Lord. It is believed that submissiveness toward the will of the Lord will render a believer a sense of fulfillment. However, following out-dated human culture will lead to oppression, confusion and the sense of

such as fast, prayer, offering and others. In doing so, he raised hostility from Jewish leaders and confusion from his own and John's followers. He even jeopardized his ministry and eventually his life. Despite these, he did not appear to show any tendency of receding. Tradition and true Lordship can be contradictory.

¹⁴⁶ Matt. 3:15. Jesus insisted to follow the ritual of baptism performed by John the Baptist.

loss of purpose in life. The first project is designed to study the influence of church culture in the roles and the lives of Chinese Christian women in North America and in Mainland China.

I. First Project Result: A Woman's Roles Survey:

The results for the first project, the survey of woman's roles in Chinese churches in North America and in China, are listed in Appendix C (Rutgers Community Christian Church in North America) and Appendix D (house churches in Mainland China).

A. Understanding of Woman's Roles:

There is a significantly lower percentage of believers in China (12.8% men and 16.3% women)¹⁴⁷ than in North America (37% men and 33% women)¹⁴⁸ who believe in the restriction of women in preaching. This significant difference is due to the fact that there are many more women preaching in house churches in China than in RCCC in North America. If there had been no women preaching in China, there would be practically no church in China right now.

However, the percentages of believers in China who believe the restrictions on women serving as elders or pastors are about the same as those in North America. This reflects the result of leadership training in China rather than a true condition of church

¹⁴⁷ Appendix D, table 28.

¹⁴⁸ Appendix C, table 1.

organization. Due to the political persecution, it is impossible to have a systematic management of church organization in China. There are very few church leaders in China who have the titles of elders or pastors. Only the three-self churches may have pastors designated by the government. House churches are led by “preachers” or senior brothers and sisters who carry no official titles. Not until recently have house churches been able to support brothers or sisters to receive full-time formal theological training due to the improved economic conditions. Even with formal theological training, these few full time “preachers” still do not possess any official title. To many believers, elders or pastors probably are the terms heard during leadership training only. These results demonstrate that people’s understanding of woman’s roles in church is chiefly from church teaching or the church context they are exposed to rather than from a true understanding of the Bible.

In RCCC, there is practically no difference in the belief in woman’s restrictions between believers who have rich Bible knowledge and those who have poor Bible knowledge.¹⁴⁹ This result echoes the previous result: believers’ understanding in woman’s roles is primarily from church teaching or the church context they are exposed to rather than from the true Bible understanding. However, in China, there is some difference between these two groups even though the difference is not significant¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁹ Appendix C, table 4.

¹⁵⁰ Appendix D, table 32.

This is reflected from the fact that RCCC has a stronger church teaching than house churches in Mainland China.¹⁵¹

Love, obedience, faith, perseverance and many other godly character traits are obviously the will of the Lord for His sons and daughters. He intends to mold all his sons and daughters to be like Jesus. Christians are to live a life resembling the life of Jesus. However, it is worth pondering if all the churches in the world have to operate in the same manner as the first century Ephesian church throughout all time, with elders and deacons as church leaders. For churches in Mainland China, is it necessary to convert their present situation to the first century Ephesian style, with men on the leadership positions and women behind the scene?

B. Discrepancies Between Professed Belief and Practical Living

The great majority of believers in RCCC do not show a preference in the gender of the preachers, as long as they are preaching the word of God (65% men and 91% women).¹⁵² There are only a few believers who prefer male preachers (29% men and 6% women) even though one-third of them (37% men and 33% women) believe women should be restricted from preaching.¹⁵³ These data demonstrate inconsistency between people's pronounced belief (women's restriction in preaching) and their real life (no preference in the gender of the preacher). This discrepancy is much more

¹⁵¹ RCCC has a sturdy church structure: elders on the top corroborated by pastors, and deacons and cell group leaders in the middle affiliating brothers and sisters to the church leaders. Church teaching is unified passing downward from pastors and elders to brothers and sisters through this sturdy structure. Due to the political situation, it is impossible for churches in China to carry any form of structure. Unified teachings, therefore, are not as thorough.

¹⁵² Appendix C, table 6.

¹⁵³ Appendix C, table 2.

prominent in women than in men. At least over one quarter of the women showed this discrepancy.¹⁵⁴ This then implies that church teachings teach woman's restrictions although believers somehow do benefit from women's contribution. Such inconsistency is not observed in China.¹⁵⁵

There is also a discrepancy between the belief in restrictions of woman's roles in church and the belief of man's and woman's role plays in church and in family. The majority of believers believe in the restrictions of women becoming elders and pastors.¹⁵⁶ However, there is also a majority of believers, regardless of gender, the extent of the Bible knowledge, or the extent of the knowledge in woman's roles,¹⁵⁷ who believe roles have to be determined by personalities, gifts and talents.

There are a few believers from both groups who believe women should have their heads covered (6 in RCCC and 12 in Mainland China).¹⁵⁸ However, as the author observes, there are no women either in RCCC or in Mainland China who have their heads covered, not even the four women in RCCC or the five in Mainland China who claim such teaching as trans-cultural. It is a rather dangerous sign that believers can live their lives comfortably with a huge discrepancy between their professed belief (women should have their heads covered) and their daily life practice (no women come

¹⁵⁴ 33% minus 6% is 27%.

¹⁵⁵ Appendix D, table 30 and 34.

¹⁵⁶ Appendix C, table 2 and D, table 29.

¹⁵⁷ Appendix C, tables 13, 14, 15, 16; and D, tables 41, 42, 43, 44.

¹⁵⁸ Appendix C, table 21 and Appendix D, table 49.

to church with their heads covered) without raising any questions. This discrepancy means that they are very accustomed to not living out what they believe. Literal teachings of Biblical rules with no regard to cultural factors may result in such discrepancy.

C. Women in Leadership Positions and Male Inadequacy

With fewer restrictions in woman's roles in China, there are significantly more women in China (43.8%) than those in RCCC (25%)¹⁵⁹ who feel they are living a life fulfilling God's calling. With women more actively involved in church leadership positions, men in China are not any less active in serving the Lord (39.5% fulfilling the calling from God) comparing with those in RCCC (40%). The hypothesis that women's leadership is a result of male inadequacy fails to prove its validity in this survey.¹⁶⁰ Women's participation in church leadership is neither the result from nor does it lead to male inadequacy. Restrictions of women's engagement in church leadership positions do not aggrandize male leadership. It merely deprives women of their opportunities to serve God and hence incapacitates the Kingdom of God. Nineteen percent¹⁶¹ of women in RCCC could have served God better and more believers may be blessed through them.

¹⁵⁹ Appendix D, table 37 and Appendix C, table 9.

¹⁶⁰ This is the explanation Complementarians give for the rising of Judge Deborah.

¹⁶¹ 43.8% minus 25% is 18.8%.

D. Woman's Roles in the Family:

The majority of believers in North America and in China, regardless of gender, extent in Biblical knowledge, or knowledge in the understanding of woman's roles,¹⁶² believe in the egalitarian family style. If church is a family for the people of God, should this family be dramatically different from the family of a man and a woman? Should the church teach believers different sets of behaviors in their families and in the family of God?

E. Gender Dichotomy in Church Ministries:

Gender dichotomy in church ministries is more prominent in RCCC¹⁶³ than in Mainland China.¹⁶⁴ There is a higher percentage of men than women serving as adult Sunday school teachers, deacons, and cell group leaders in both groups. However, the difference in China is not significant. In RCCC, gender dichotomy is more prominent. In RCCC, the majority of men serve in adult education ministry and deacon board (52% of the men who participate in church ministries) while the majority of women locate themselves in children's ministry (42% of the women who participate in church ministries). As a result of the limitation in woman's roles in church ministries, there are many more women who fail to participate in any church ministry in RCCC (34%) than in Mainland China (12.4%). Even with restrictions in woman's roles in church ministries, there are many more men in RCCC (35%) than in Mainland China (15.1%)

¹⁶² Appendix C, tables 17, 18, 19, 20; and D, tables 45, 46, 47, 48.

¹⁶³ Appendix C, table 27.

¹⁶⁴ Appendix D, table 55.

who fail to participate in any church ministry. Restrictions in woman's roles in church ministries do not encourage men to serve the Lord better. In fact, these restrictions give men tremendous pressure. Men are pressured to think that they have to be more gifted than women in order to serve God. This mentality may hinder many a man from stepping forward in participating in church ministries.¹⁶⁵ Gender dichotomy in serving the Lord does not only put women in restrictions, but it also hampers men from serving the Lord fully.

In conclusion, according to the result of this survey, believers' understanding of woman's roles in church ministries is chiefly from church teachings or the church context they are exposed to. Having women in leadership positions is not the result from nor does it result in male inadequacy. Literal teachings of biblical rules with no regard to the contemporary cultural context lead to discrepancies between believers' professed beliefs and their practical living. Gender dichotomy in church ministries does not merely deprive women of their opportunities in serving the Lord, but it also prevents men from serving God freely.

II. Second Project Result: A Woman Mentorship Program:

Due to the limited numbers of roles for women to serve in RCCC, the second project is designed to help women step out of their limited traditional roles and to serve God in a more active and diversified way. By leading and serving one another, women,

¹⁶⁵ Men and women are closely intertwined. Bondage of women will inevitably result in bondage of men. Liberation of women will also result in the liberation of men.

especially the five small-group leaders, learn to struggle through life issues themselves rather than quietly listening to and following instructions given from authorities.

The result of this project is listed in Appendix E. After the ten months' program, there is a full-scale improvement in these five woman leaders. During the process of this project, four of these five women have started teaching adult Sunday school and two of them have been involved in house-church training in China. Their contributions have benefited many Christians especially those in the house churches in Mainland China.

One of the woman leaders, M. Y., was in a state of depression and confusion when this program was initiated. After staying at home and listening to her husband for ten years, she did not understand why God created her nor did she comprehend the purpose of her life even though she has studied through "The Purpose Driven Life".¹⁶⁶ M. Y. was a lawyer. After she and her husband became Christians, she quit her job and stayed home to take care of her children. She has also been involved in children's ministry for nearly ten years. She does not regret quitting her job and taking care of her children, nor does she have any complaint in serving in children's ministry. However, these things did not give her the sense of fulfillment. When trying to obey her husband and taking care of children seven days a week, she has more and more uncontrollable anger outbursts. She has also lost her ability to make decisions or to think things through. In this ten months' mentorship program, she learned the inward submission toward the Lord rather than the outward what-can-do and what-cannot-do. In the

¹⁶⁶ Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

process of learning to lead other women, she regained the ability to make decisions and think through life issues independently. She is now more submissive to the Lord with subsiding anger. She has also learned to speak to her husband with dignity and confidence. As she continues to regain her confidence little by little, she is willing to take the challenge of doing house-church training in China.

The second woman leader Y. L. was also in a mild depressive stage when this program was initiated. Well protected by her gentle and considerate husband, she still had the problem of worry and fear. As she led other women in this program, she gained a direct relationship with the Lord herself rather than merely listening to her husband or church leaders. Although there are still things out of control in her life, Y. L. now has a direct connection with her creator. Regardless of the difficulties, she has learned to serve God whole heartedly.

The third woman leader, L. W., is becoming a pastor's wife. However, she has never had any leadership experience besides teaching children's Sunday school. She has never even led a Bible study, let alone speaking or sharing in a group of adults. With a submissive outlook, she is indeed fearful and withdrawal inwardly. This program is very tough for her because she is not used to leading other adults. She does not even feel comfortable talking to them. With her husband in the process of becoming a pastor, she understands she has been behind for too many years. With a godly outlook, she admits that she has been hiding herself in children's ministry for over ten years. Her fear, lack of confidence and withdrawal have been harbored by the

conservative iconic view of women submissiveness. She will need quite some time to pick herself up. Even though she might still serve God in the area of children's Sunday school, she understands children's ministry can not be her shelter any longer.

The fourth woman leader, Q. P., used to have marital difficulties. Teachings of woman's submission did not help any of her marital problems. They only oppressed her and her son, and humiliated both of them. Meditating through issues of self-worth, a direct relationship with the Lord, leadership, and true womanhood as she leads other women, she finds her upright position in the Lord. She is able to stand firm and to minister to her husband in a gentle manner. She has also become a great leader for she has unofficially led many men and women in RCCC and in Mainland China to have a direct and intimate relationship with God.

The fifth woman leader, J. C., was a divorcee before she became a Christian. She learned to assume her partial responsibility in her divorce and accept herself as a divorcee. Walking out of shame, guilt and self-pity, she is now gaining confidence in serving God and leading other divorcees to go through the similar process.

For all five woman leaders, this ten months' leadership training does not make them any more proud or dominating, nor does it create any marital conflict in their marriages. Instead, it helps them to manage their marital difficulties and their life issues. They have become humbler, more submissive, and yet more confident and firm. With an enriched direct relationship with the Lord and better understanding of women

submissiveness, they are able to serve the Lord in a deeper and more diversified way. More people are blessed by their ministries.

The improvement of small-group members is different from that of the five woman leaders. There is no full-scale improvement noticed. Instead, those who rated themselves low in the beginning are the ones who made the significant improvements. However, those who rated themselves high in the beginning fail to show any improvement. Throughout this program, there were complaints and non-compliance heard from those who regarded themselves in somewhat high positions. This is the fruit of the hierarchy belief. To those who hold the hierarchy belief, learning is a downward dictatorship. Those who regarded themselves in somewhat high positions are willing to learn from men or higher-ups only. They are reluctant to learn from sisters around them.

III. Conclusion:

People tend to follow rules since people tend to build their security upon an outward boundary in sight. Such an outward boundary may easily replace the role of the Lord in a believer's heart. The very problem of the Israelites at Mt. Sinai was that they wanted a god with form in sight (Exo. 32). They ended up worshiping a gold calf. Jesus therefore stressed that worship is not an outward appearance but rather an inward relationship with God (John 4:1-26). Therefore, regarding woman's ministry, what is primary and clearly the will of the Lord is a woman's relationship with God. What is not primary or clearly the will of the Lord is what a woman can do and what she can not

do. Even with numerous debates throughout decades of years, women's roles, especially in church ministries, is still not clear. However, it is clear that culture does play a significant role no matter in the biblical teachings or biblical narrations. In the biblical account, there are teachings of restrictions, yet there are also incidences of the absence of restriction. Strict enforcement of outward restrictions many times creates an idol with a form in sight. It may also impede the work of the Spirit. Following the outward rules many times hinders a woman's inward connection with her God. What a woman serves in the church should be an expression of the inward calling from her God rather than a blind obedience toward man-made rules. Man cares what a person does, while God is concerned with how each believer does whatever he is called to do. Man cares about the out-ward position a person assumes, while God is concerned with each believer's inward goodness and faithfulness in performing his callings (Matt. 25:14-30). God has the sovereignty to choose someone out of human order to fulfill his divine purpose.¹⁶⁷

Submissiveness, quietness, and non-dominating are clearly the will of the Lord. They are godly characters. However, they are not merely godly characters for women, they are also essential traits for men. They are, as a matter of fact, fruit of the Spirit and essential qualities for leaders. Nevertheless, submissiveness, quietness or non-dominating over men do not necessarily signal that women shall merely be listening and following. Nor does it lead to women's subordination. Women's godliness is an inward relationship with the Lord rather than the outward what-to-do and what-not-to-do.

¹⁶⁷ There are plenty of occasions that God raised people out of human expectation. Rehab was a pagan prostitute, Ruth was a Moabite, Jephthah was a son of a prostitute...

Women can stay home listening to their husbands and yet harbor anger and hatred. Women may also teach and lead with a humble and submissive spirit. Godly leadership training does not make anyone more proud. It actually nurtures humility in the trainees. Both men and women can be benefited from godly leadership training.

This study reveals the influence of the church context and teachings on the roles of women in church ministries and on believers' lives. However, it takes more cultural studies to establish a conclusive composition. Up to now, the debate about women in leadership positions is still in process. It also requires more studies in the years to come to settle this debate. Before any conclusive resolution is arrived, helping women to exert their best in hierarchical churches without causing conflicts with authorities is a task that requires wisdom and courage.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROJECT ONE

1. Your gender:
 - a. male
 - b. female
2. Your age
 - a. 20-29
 - b. 30-39
 - c. 40-49
 - d. 50-59
 - e. 60 and over
3. Your education background
 - a. graduate degree
 - b. college graduate
 - c. higher school graduate
 - d. grade schools
4. Years you have been baptized

- a. 0-5 years
 - b. 6-10 years
 - c. 11-15 years
 - d. 16-20 years
 - e. 21 years and over
5. Your marital status
- a. single
 - b. married
 - c. divorced
 - d. widow/widower
6. What do you think women can do in church ?
- a. preach
 - b. teach both men and women in Sunday School
 - c. teach women and children only in Sunday School
 - d. serve as elders
 - e. serve as pastors
 - f. serve as deacons
 - g. counsel men and women
 - h. counsel women and children only
 - i. lead cell group
 - j. lead women and children only
7. From 0 (completely do not understand) to 10 (completely understand), rate the level of your understanding in Bible. _____

8. From 0 (completely do not understand) to 10 (completely understand), rate the level of your understanding in the women's role in the Bible. _____

The following can have more than one answer:

9. I would like to listen to

- a. male preachers
- b. female preachers
- c. whoever preaches the word of God

10. Where do you serve in your church

- a. education ministry
- b. children ministry
- c. deacon board
- d. Bible study group
- e. caring and counseling ministry
- f. none
- g. others _____

11. Do you think you have fully fulfilled your calling or served fully with your spiritual gifts?

- a. yes
- b. no

if no, why? _____

12. Do you think you have the freedom to express your feelings and opinions in your church?

a. yes

b. no

if no, why? _____

13. If you feel satisfied about yourself, it is because of your

a. successful marriage

b. successful career

c. successful child-rearing

d. fruitful ministry in church

e. good personal relationships

f. good appearance

g. good relationship with God

h. gifts and talents

14. If you feel dissatisfied about yourself, it is because of your

a. unsuccessful marriage

b. unsuccessful career

c. unsuccessful child-rearing

d. lack of fruitful service in church

e. unfruitful personal relationships

f. appearance

g. poor relationship with God

h. dissatisfaction in the use of gifts or talents

15. Regarding working women, I think

- a. women should not work outside their home, especially when children are young
- b. women should be independent and support family financially
- c. depends on situations and needs
- d. this is a decision of individual family. Such decision should not be influenced by others.
- e. other _____

16. Regarding genders and roles, I think

- a. both should be distinct
- a. both depend on personalities, traits, and gifts
- b. both depend on situations and needs
- c. other _____

17. Regarding children rearing, I think

- a. the mother is the primary care-taker
- b. the father is the primary care-taker
- c. it depends on the family situation
- d. other _____

18. Regarding house chores, I think

- a. it is women's job regardless of the situation
- b. it should be shared if both the husband and the wife are working
- c. should be shared regardless
- d. others _____

19. Regarding women serving in church, I think my church

- a. is on the right track
- b. is too narrow
- c. is too open

20. Regarding family decisions, I think

- a. decisions should be made by men
- b. decisions should be agreed upon by both husband and wife
- c. decisions can be made by women too
- d. they depend on the situation

21. I believe it should be taken as transcultural truth that

- a. the wife should submit to the husband (1 Pet. 2:11)
- b. women should not teach nor have authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12)
- c. women should have their head covered (1 Cor. 11:2-16)
- d. women should be silent (1 Cor. 14:34-35)
- e. none of the above

22. I believe that women

- a. are generally oppressed
- b. are generally controlling and thus should be oppressed
- c. are not understood
- d. can never be understood
- e. are ignored
- f. do not have to receive special attention

23. In these few years, the woman's role in the church has become
- a. more prominent
 - b. less prominent
 - c. stay the same
 - d. I do not pay attention to this aspect
24. From 0 (not at all) to 10 (complete) rate how much your needs are taken care of in church
- a. knowledge of salvation
 - b. biblical knowledge _____
 - c. spiritual growth _____
 - d. equipped to serve _____
 - e. family and interpersonal relationship _____
 - f. love, care, understanding and acceptance _____
25. Give explanation for the items above lower than 5 _____
26. When experiencing difficulties, you would like to seek help through
- a. a pastor or an elder
 - b. a pastor's wife
 - c. cell group
 - d. depends on the level of difficulties
 - e. no one
- why? _____

Thank you for your cooperation. May God bless you and His kingdom

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROJECT TWO

From 0 (none) to 10 (completely) rate yourself in the following aspects:

1. How much have I fulfilled the life God has called me to live? _____
2. How much am I functioning in direct relation to the body of Christ? _____
3. How much am I influenced by views of church authority and fellow Christians? ____
4. How much am I influenced by cultural and general views of womanhood? _____
5. How freely can I talk to God? _____
6. How freely can I express myself? _____
7. How much can I think through and solve issues independently? _____
8. How freely can I execute the things I am burdened to do? _____
9. How freely can I just be myself? _____
10. How much do I enjoy being a woman? _____

APPENDIX C

PROJECT ONE RESULT FROM RCCC

I. Demographic Data:

There are a total of 258 brothers and sisters from the Mandarin Congregation in Rutgers Community Christian Church (RCCC) who participated in this survey. RCCC is composed of three congregations: Mandarin congregation, Cantonese congregation, and English congregation. The majority of the Mandarin congregations are the first generation Chinese immigrants who came to U.S. as students or scholars. This survey was conducted in the Bible study groups or Sunday School classes from September 2004 to May 2005. Therefore, most participants in this survey are the brothers and sisters who are fairly involved in church activities and Bible study. The demographical data are listed in table 1.

Some of the Bible study groups consist of both genders while other groups are women Bible study groups. Therefore, there are much more sisters involved in this survey than brothers. The distribution of people in different ages peaks at the ages of 40 to 49. At this age, the first generation Chinese immigrants are well settled in work, family and finance. They are then able to set their heart and mind to develop God's

Kingdom. The majority of the RCCC congregation have post graduate degrees. Education background is the foundation for them to settle in this country. There are more people who rated themselves high in Biblical knowledge and the knowledge of woman's roles in the Bible than those who rated themselves low. However, there are 7% people who believe they understand the Bible well while they believe they do not understand woman's roles in the Bible well. RCCC is strong in biblical teaching.

Table 1. Demographic Data of RCCC Survey

| | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----|-----|
| Gender Distribution | Male | 78 | 30% |
| | Female | 180 | 70% |
| Age Distribution | 20-29 | 15 | 6% |
| | 30-39 | 58 | 22% |
| | 40-49 | 103 | 40% |
| | 50-59 | 50 | 19% |
| | Over 60 | 32 | 12% |
| Educational Background | Post Graduate | 132 | 51% |
| | College Graduate | 91 | 35% |
| | High School | 31 | 12% |
| | Under High School | 4 | 2% |
| Years Being Baptized | Not baptized Yet | 37 | 14% |
| | Up to 5 Years | 64 | 25% |
| | 6-10 Years | 53 | 21% |
| | 11-15 Years | 45 | 17% |
| | 16-20 Years | 17 | 7% |
| | Over 20 Years | 42 | 16% |
| Bible Understanding | High | 138 | 53% |
| | Low | 98 | 38% |
| | No Response | 22 | 9% |
| Understanding of | High | 119 | 46% |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----|-----|
| Woman's Roles in the Bible | Low | 115 | 45% |
| | No Response | 24 | 9% |

II. Results:

1. Woman's Restrictions in the Church: Table 2 to 5 shows the numbers and percentages of people who believe women should be restricted from preaching, serving as elders, or serving as pastors in the church.

Table 2. Gender Factor on Woman's Restrictions in the Church

| Restriction | Men | | Women | |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| Preaching | 29 | 37% | 60 | 33% |
| Serving as Elders | 51 | 65% | 104 | 58% |
| Serving as Pastors | 46 | 59% | 99 | 55% |
| No Restriction | 17 | 22% | 52 | 29% |
| No Response | 3 | 4% | 9 | 5% |

There are slightly more men than women who believe that there should be restrictions in woman's roles in the church. However, the difference is not significant. The sisters of RCCC are well trained in submission to authoritative teachings. The majority do not believe women should be elders or pastors.

Table 3. Factor of Years Being Baptized on Woman's Restrictions in the Church

| Restriction | Not Yet | 0-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 20+ |
|--------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| Preaching | 9 24% | 23 36% | 24 45% | 14 31% | 4 24% | 15 36% |
| Being Elders | 17 46% | 40 63% | 36 68% | 23 51% | 9 53% | 30 71% |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| Being Pastors | 13 35% | 34 53% | 34 64% | 29 64% | 7 41% | 28 67% |
| No Restriction | 13 35% | 19 30% | 12 23% | 12 27% | 6 35% | 7 17% |
| No Response | 4 11% | 2 3% | 2 4% | 2 4% | 0 0% | 2 5% |

Generally speaking, those who have been baptized longer are more conservative in the belief of woman's roles in the church. However, such ratios are not in linear correlation with the length of time after baptism.

Table 4. Factor of Bible Knowledge on Woman's Restrictions in Church

| Restriction | High | | Low | |
|----------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Preaching | 51 | 37% | 32 | 33% |
| Being Elders | 85 | 62% | 61 | 62% |
| Being Pastors | 82 | 59% | 54 | 55% |
| No Restriction | 38 | 28% | 29 | 30% |
| No Response | 1 | 1% | 2 | 2% |

There is practically no difference between the people who are familiar with the Bible and those who are not familiar with the Bible. In other words, the aspect of woman's restrictions in the church is independent of the Bible knowledge. It is rooted in either church teaching or the church context they are exposed to. This result corresponds well with the previous result.

Table 5. Factor of Understanding Woman's Roles in the Bible on Woman's Restrictions in the Church

| Restriction | High | | Low | |
|---------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Preaching | 47 | 39% | 35 | 30% |
| Being Elders | 76 | 64% | 69 | 60% |
| Being Pastors | 73 | 61% | 62 | 54% |

| | | | | |
|----------------|----|-----|----|-----|
| No Restriction | 32 | 27% | 34 | 30% |
| No Response | 1 | 1% | 2 | 2% |

There is a slight difference in the belief of woman's restrictions in the church between these two groups. It is worth further study to determine the common understanding of woman's roles in the Bible is referred to the church teaching and the length of exposure to the church context or to the true understanding of woman's roles in God's intent.

2. Preference of Preaching by Men or Women:

Table 6. General Data

| Preference | Men | | Women | |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| Male Preachers only | 23 | 29% | 10 | 6% |
| Female Preachers only | 0 | 0% | 2 | 1% |
| Both | 51 | 65% | 163 | 91% |
| No Response | 4 | 5% | 5 | 3% |

The majority of believers show no preference in the preachers' gender. They concern more of the contents of the preaching than the gender of the preacher. However, there are significantly more men than women who prefer male preachers only. None of the men prefer female preachers to male preachers.

Table 7. Factor of Bible Knowledge on the Preference of Preachers

| Preference | High | | Low | |
|-----------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Male Preachers Only | 25 | 18% | 7 | 7% |
| Female Preachers Only | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Both | 111 | 80% | 89 | 91% |
| No Response | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |

The majority believers show no preference in preachers' gender. However, there are significantly more people who rated themselves high in Bible knowledge that prefer male preachers only. RCCC is conservative in its biblical teachings. She takes a traditional stance in women's roles in family and in church. Therefore, those who rated themselves high in bible knowledge or understanding in women's roles in the Bible often take a hierarchy stance. This result is uniform throughout this study.

Table 8. Factor of Understanding of Woman's Roles in the Bible on the Preference of Preachers

| Preference | High | | Low | |
|-----------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Male Preachers Only | 23 | 19% | 8 | 7% |
| Female Preachers Only | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |
| Both | 94 | 79% | 105 | 91% |
| No Response | 1 | 1% | 1 | 1% |

Again, the majority believers show no preference. However, people who are rated high in understanding of women's roles in the Bible are more likely to prefer male preachers only.

3. Fulfillment of the Callings: Tables 9 and 10 are the numbers and percentages of people believing they have or have not fully exerted their gifts from God and fulfilled their callings from God.

Table 9. Gender Factor in the Fulfillment of the Callings

| Fulfillment | Men | | Women | |
|-------------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| Yes | 31 | 40% | 45 | 25% |
| No | 38 | 49% | 112 | 62% |
| No Response | 9 | 12% | 23 | 13% |

There is significantly lower percentage of women who believe they have fulfilled their callings from God. This result is closely related to the result in #9 (Table 27), where men and women serve in the church. The majority of women in RCCC are involved in children's Sunday School only.

Table 10. Factor of Biblical Knowledge in the Fulfillment of the Callings

| Fulfillment | High | | Low | |
|-------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Yes | 56 | 41% | 14 | 14% |
| No | 75 | 54% | 70 | 71% |

Bible knowledge is of great importance in serving the Lord in RCCC. It plays a significant role in the fulfillment of the calling in a believer's life.

4. Freedom in Expressing Feelings: Tables 11 and 12 are the numbers and percentages of people who feel they are or are not able to express their feelings freely in the church.

Table 11. Gender Factor in Expression of Feelings

| Freedom in Expression | Men | | Women | |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| Yes | 58 | 74% | 117 | 65% |
| No | 17 | 22% | 48 | 26% |
| No Response | 3 | 4% | 15 | 8% |

The majority feels they have the freedom to express their feelings in the church. The percentage of women is slightly lower than that of men.

Table 12. Factor of Bible Knowledge in Feeling Expression

| Freedom in Expression | High | | Low | |
|-----------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Yes | 90 | 65% | 69 | 70% |
| No | 39 | 28% | 23 | 23% |

According to the survey, Bible knowledge does not play any significant role in the freedom of expressing feelings in the church.

5. Man's and Woman's Role Plays in Church and Family:

Table 13. General Data in the Role Plays

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| Men and Women Have to Have Distinctive Roles | 84 | 33% |
| Role Plays by Personalities, Gifts and Talents | 153 | 69% |
| Role Plays According to Situations | 69 | 27% |

The majority of believers believe that the role play in the family has to depend on the individual's personality, talents and gifts.

Table 14. Factor of Gender in Role Plays

| Role Plays | Men | Women |
|-------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Have to be Distinctive | 30 38% | 54 30% |
| By Personalities, Gifts and Talents | 44 56% | 109 61% |
| According to Situations | 25 32% | 44 24% |

Gender is not a significant factor in viewing male and female roles. However, men seem to be more stereotyped than women.

Table 15. Factor of Bible Knowledge in Role Plays

| Role Plays | High | Low |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Have to be Distinctive | 55 40% | 21 21% |
| By Personalities, Gifts and Talents | 83 60% | 62 63% |
| According to Situations | 36 26% | 28 29% |

The majority people believe that role plays should be determined according to personalities, gifts, and talents. However, there are more people who rated themselves high in Bible knowledge believe in distinctive role play in family than those who rated themselves low. RCCC is conservative in its Bible teaching. Therefore, those who receive more biblical teaching will be more conservative.

Table 16. Factor of Knowledge of Woman's Roles in Bible in Role Plays

| Role Plays | High | Low |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| Have to be Distinctive | 48 40% | 27 23% |
| By Personalities, Gifts and Talents | 68 57% | 76 66% |
| According to Situations | 32 27% | 32 28% |

Those who are familiar with women's roles in the Bible also believe in distinctive role plays. RCCC is strong in its teaching of women submission.

6. Family Decisions:

Table 17. General Data

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| Decisions Should be Made by Man | 47 | 18% |
| Decisions be Discussed by Man and Woman | 192 | 74% |
| Woman Should Have the Right to Make Decisions | 2 | 1% |
| Depends on Situations | 47 | 18% |

The majority believe that family decisions should be discussed by both husband and wife. However, RCCC teaches that the husband is the one makes the final decision after the discussion.

Table 18. Factor of Gender on Family Decisions

| Family Decisions | Men | Women |
|------------------|--------|--------|
| Made by Man | 14 18% | 33 18% |

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------|---------|
| Discussed by Man and Woman | 58 74% | 134 74% |
| Women have Rights | 3 4% | 2 1% |
| Depends on Situations | 14 18% | 34 19% |

There is practically no difference in gender factor.

Table 19. Factor of Biblical Knowledge on Family Decisions

| Family Decisions | High | Low |
|----------------------------|---------|--------|
| Made by Man | 30 22% | 15 15% |
| Discussed by Man and Woman | 109 79% | 74 76% |
| Women have Rights | 3 2% | 2 2% |
| Depends on Situations | 26 19% | 15 15% |

People who rated themselves high in the Bible knowledge believe that men should make family decisions.

Table 20. Factor of Knowledge in Woman's Roles in the Bible on Family Decisions

| Family Decisions | High | Low |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|
| Made by Man | 30 25% | 15 13% |
| Discussed by Man and Woman | 89 75% | 92 80% |
| Women have right | 3 3% | 2 2% |
| Depends on Situations | 24 20% | 16 14% |

People who rated themselves high in the understanding of women's roles in the Bible are twice more likely to believe that family decisions should be made by men. Again, RCCC takes a conservative stance in women's roles in family and church. Those who rated themselves high in Bible knowledge or in the understanding of women's roles in the Bible often take a hierarchy stance.

7. Transcultural nature of Biblical Passages: Tables 21 to 24 are the numbers and the percentages of people who consider the listed Biblical passages about women as true regardless the cultural context.

Table 21. General Data

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| Woman Submission (1 Tim. 2:11) | 40 | 16% |
| Woman not to Rule Over Man (1 Cor. 2:12) | 28 | 11% |
| Head Covering (1 Cor. 11:2-16) | 6 | 2% |
| Woman to be Silent (1 Cor. 14:34-35) | 5 | 2% |
| None are Transcultural | 172 | 67% |

The majority believe that all the passages above about women are dependent upon the culture.

Table 22. Factor of Gender on the Transcultural Nature of Biblical Passages

| Bible Passage | Men | Women |
|----------------------------|--------|---------|
| Woman Submission | 11 14% | 29 16% |
| Woman not to Rule Over Man | 12 15% | 16 9% |
| Head Covering | 2 3% | 4 2% |
| Woman to be Silent | 0 0% | 5 3% |
| None are Transcultural | 55 71% | 117 65% |

There is no significant difference in gender factor. The only passage that significantly more men than women believing as culturally independent is woman not to rule over man.

Table 23. Factor of Bible Knowledge on the Transcultural Nature of Biblical Passages

| Bible Passage | High | Low |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|
| Woman Submission | 24 17% | 11 11% |
| Woman not to Rule Over Man | 21 15% | 5 6% |
| Head Covering | 4 3% | 1 1% |
| Woman to be Silent | 3 2% | 1 1% |
| None are Transcultural | 88 64% | 74 76% |

In the small fraction of people, those who rated themselves high in Bible knowledge have higher tendency in the belief of the transcultural nature of biblical passages. However, those five people who believe the woman head-covering as true now would be disappointed because there is no woman in RCCC who has her head covered, not even the women who believe it true now. There is a gap between theological belief and practical living, at least for these five people. It is an inevitable phenomenon if the Bible is taken literally with no regard to the cultural context.

Table 24. Factor of Knowledge in Woman's Roles in the Bible on the Transcultural Nature of Biblical Passages

| Bible Passage | High | Low |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|
| Woman Submission | 24 20% | 12 10% |
| Woman not to Rule Over Man | 19 16% | 6 5% |
| Head Covering | 4 3% | 1 1% |
| Woman to be Silent | 3 3% | 1 1% |
| None are Transcultural | 72 61% | 89 77% |

Again, there are significant differences between these two groups of people who rated themselves high in the understanding of women's roles in the Bible and who rated themselves low.

8. The Female Status Believed in Societies:

Table 26 shows that there are more than twice as many women than men who believe that women are oppressed. There are almost three times as many men than women who believe women cannot be understood. There are also three times as many men than women who believe there is no need to pay attention to women. However, they are the minorities.

Table 25. General Data

| | | |
|---|----|-----|
| Women are Oppressed | 19 | 7% |
| Women Should be Oppressed for Their Controlling | 12 | 5% |
| Women are not Understood | 76 | 29% |
| Women can not be Understood | 18 | 7% |
| Women are Ignored | 55 | 21% |
| No Need to Pay Attention to Women | 4 | 2% |

Table 26. Factor of Gender on the Female Social Status

| Social Status | Men | | Women | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| Women are Oppressed | 3 | 4% | 16 | 9% |
| Women are to be Oppressed | 4 | 5% | 8 | 4% |
| Women are not Understood | 21 | 27% | 55 | 31% |
| Women Can Not be Understood | 11 | 14% | 9 | 5% |
| Women are Ignored | 18 | 23% | 37 | 21% |
| No Need to Pay Attention | 2 | 3% | 2 | 1% |

9. Male and Female Roles in RCCC:

Table 27. General Data

| Ministry Role | Men | | Women | |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| Adult Sunday School | 13 | 17% | 2 | 1% |
| Children Sunday School | 10 | 13% | 51 | 28% |
| Deacon | 7 | 9% | 3 | 2% |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----|-----|----|-----|
| Cell Group Leader | 13 | 17% | 18 | 10% |
| Caring | 11 | 14% | 32 | 18% |
| Others | 11 | 14% | 29 | 16% |
| Nothing | 27 | 35% | 61 | 34% |

There are only two women out of the total of one hundred and eighty women who teach adult Sunday School, one of them is the author and the other is her co-worker. Twenty eight percent of the women teach children Sunday School, which is more than twice as many as that of men. It is also women's major ministry in RCCC. Many of those women who claim themselves as deacons or cell group leaders are actually the wives of deacons or the wives of cell group leaders. RCCC has only one female deacon out of the total twenty-eight deacons. She is in charge of women's ministry. The only cell groups that can be led by women are women's Bible study groups. However, there are not so many woman Bible study group leaders involved in this survey. In other words, the participants of this survey actually are stretching their best to the extreme. The majority of people in the church play no role in church ministries. Those who participated in this survey, as a matter of fact, are the ones who are actively involved in church activities. This result represents the better part of the RCCC congregation.

APPENDIX D

PROJECT ONE RESULT FROM MAINLAND CHINA

I. Demographic Data:

There are a total of 264 brothers and sisters involved in this survey. The majority of them are house church leaders since most of the survey was carried out after the house church leadership training in March and November 2005. Many of them are from peasant families in villages. Their education level is much lower comparing with believers in RCCC. The demographical data are listed in table 28. Due to less severe religious persecution in the past fifteen years, the great majority of believers have been baptized for less than fifteen years. Only one third of the house church leaders are men. As a matter of fact, this has been improved dramatically in the past fifteen years. When the door of China was first open in 1989, there was scarcely any male leader. It is partially due to the family responsibility and partially due to the severe persecution. If there was any man leader, he would have been in prison. In these recent fifteen years, the house church training has been booming. Christians, clergy or layman, from Taiwan and from North America, have been gushing into this mass land and offering them biblical training. The headship of man is a major topic in church organization training. Due to the less-severe persecution and up-lifted economical condition, Chinese parents are more able to support their sons to step forward and serve God. Practically all male

believers are encouraged to become church leaders. The majority of church leaders are young men and women under the age 30.

Table 28. Demographic Data of Churches in Mainland China

| | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----|-------|
| Gender Distribution | Male | 86 | 32.5% |
| | Female | 178 | 67.5% |
| Age Distribution | 29 and Under | 112 | 42.4% |
| | 30-39 | 51 | 19.3% |
| | 40-49 | 35 | 13.6% |
| | 50-59 | 41 | 15.5% |
| | 60 and Over | 21 | 8.0% |
| | Unspecified | 3 | 1.0% |
| Education Distribution | Post-Graduate | 12 | 4.5% |
| | College Graduate | 78 | 30.0% |
| | High School | 73 | 27.7% |
| | Under High School | 97 | 36.7% |
| | Unspecified | 4 | 1.5% |
| Years Being Baptized | Not Baptized Yet | 34 | 12.9% |
| | 0-5 | 75 | 28.4% |
| | 6-10 | 80 | 30.3% |
| | 11-15 | 31 | 11.7% |
| | 16-20 | 21 | 8.0% |
| | Over 20 | 1 | 0.4% |
| Bible Knowledge Distribution | Rich | 86 | 32.6% |
| | Poor | 135 | 51.1% |
| | Unspecified | 43 | 16.3% |
| Understanding of Women's Roles in the Bible | Rich | 95 | 36.0% |
| | Poor | 125 | 47.0% |
| | Unspecified | 44 | 16.7% |

This survey was conducted in big cities such as Shanghai and Beijing as well as in rural areas. Leaders from rural areas receive education no higher than high school, while those from big cities were all college graduates. The majority of them were baptized within these ten years due to the reduction in persecution. Generally speaking, Asians are more humble and less self-confident than the Westerners. They often set a high standard for self and others. As a result, they rate themselves rather low and they also tend to be more critical than encouraging toward each other. The great majority of house church leaders can recite the Bible word by word from cover to cover. However, their comprehension and the application of the word in daily living is not equivalent to their familiarity of the word due to the lack of teaching, narrow-mindedness, and low education.

Table 29. Age Distribution in Both Genders

| Age | Men | | Women | |
|-------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Under 29 | 54 | 62.8% | 68 | 38.2% |
| 30-39 | 22 | 25.6% | 29 | 16.9% |
| 40-49 | 7 | 8.1% | 28 | 15.7% |
| 50-59 | 9 | 10.5% | 32 | 18.0% |
| 60 and Over | 3 | 3.5% | 18 | 10.1% |
| Unspecified | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1.7% |

When the door of China was first opened, it was a shocking phenomenon that the majority house church leaders were female under the age 30. Many of them were even in their late teens. Growing up in undeveloped villages, there were no opportunities of higher education for them. They had no way to obtain any career. Therefore, they did not have the burdens of supporting families. As a result, serving God became a great

mission in their lives and God did use them to fulfill His mighty work. However, some of them chose to marry later on. The responsibility of child rearing deprived their ministries. Once they stepped into marriage, they rarely had any opportunity later on to come back and serve God again. It was, therefore, a heart-breaking decision for those girls to choose between serving God and having a family. This phenomenon has significantly changed in the past fifteen years. Due to the less severe persecution, better economical condition, and the biblical training and teaching by Taiwan and North American Christians, there are more young men coming into the mission field to serve God, with the support of their parents and wives. Therefore, there are very few male leaders over 40 years old. Most of the male leaders over 40 years old have gone through severe persecutions. On the contrary, the age distribution for female leaders from age 30 to 60 is quite even. Three women failed to specify their age. They probably really did not know their exact age. It is quite common that people do not know their exact age in rural areas in China.

II. Result

1. Woman's Restrictions in the Church: The tables below list the numbers and the percentages of people who believe women should not preach, serve as elders, or serve as pastors.

Table 30. Gender Factor on Woman's Restrictions

| Restriction | Men | | Women | |
|--------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Preaching | 11 | 12.8% | 29 | 16.3% |
| Serving as Elders | 57 | 66.3% | 105 | 59.0% |
| Serving as Pastors | 50 | 58.1% | 86 | 48.3% |

| | | | | |
|----------------|----|-------|----|-------|
| No Restriction | 18 | 21.0% | 54 | 30.3% |
| No Response | 7 | 8.1% | 9 | 5.1% |

There is a slight difference in the belief of woman's restrictions in the church between men and women. Women tend to put less restrictions in most areas except in preaching.

Table 31. Factors of Years Being Baptized on Woman's Restrictions

| Restriction | Not Yet | 0-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 20 + |
|----------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Preaching | 9 26% | 16 21% | 12 15% | 2 7% | 5 24% | 1 5% |
| Being Elder | 18 53% | 48 64% | 51 64% | 16 52% | 16 76% | 13 59% |
| Being Pastor | 16 47% | 43 57% | 39 49% | 14 45% | 12 57% | 12 55% |
| No Restriction | 8 24% | 17 23% | 22 28% | 11 36% | 0 | 8 36% |
| No Response | 5 15% | 5 7% | 3 4% | 2 7% | 0 | 1 5% |

It is interesting to see that those who have been baptized for over twenty years have put the least restrictions in woman's restrictions in the church. They are the ones who experienced the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit in using women during the Cultural Revolution.

Table 32. Factor of Bible Knowledge on Woman's Restrictions

| Restriction | High | Low |
|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Preaching | 12 14.0% | 19 14.1% |
| Serving as Elders | 59 68.6% | 81 60.0% |
| Serving as Pastors | 53 61.6% | 64 47.4% |
| No Restriction | 20 23.3% | 43 31.9% |
| No Response | 2 2.3% | 2 1.5% |

There is a slight difference in the belief of woman's restrictions in the church between those who rated themselves high in Bible knowledge and those who rated themselves low.

Table 33. Factor of Understanding Woman's Roles in the Bible on Woman's Restrictions

| Restriction | High | | Low | |
|--------------------|------|-------|-----|-------|
| Preaching | 14 | 14.7% | 17 | 13.6% |
| Serving as Elders | 62 | 65.3% | 77 | 61.6% |
| Serving as Pastors | 50 | 52.6% | 66 | 52.8% |
| No Restriction | 25 | 26.3% | 38 | 30.4% |
| No Response | 3 | 3.2% | 1 | 0.8% |

There is practically no difference in the belief of woman's restrictions in the church between those who rated themselves high in the understanding of woman's roles in the Bible and those who rated themselves low. It may be the leadership training that provides them the conviction.

2. Preference of Preaching by Men or Women:

Table 34. General Data

| Preference | Men | | Women | |
|-----------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Male Preachers only | 18 | 20.9% | 25 | 14% |
| Female Preachers only | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0.6% |
| Both | 64 | 74.4% | 144 | 80.9% |
| No Response | 4 | 4.7% | 8 | 4.5% |

The majority believers show no preference in preacher's gender. They concern more of the contents of the preaching than the gender of the preacher. However, there are more men than women who prefer male preachers only.

Table 35. Factor of Bible Knowledge on the Preference of Preachers

| Preference | High | | Low | |
|-----------------------|------|-------|-----|-------|
| Male Preachers Only | 15 | 17.4% | 26 | 19.3% |
| Female Preachers Only | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Both | 71 | 82.6% | 108 | 80.0% |
| No Response | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0.7% |

There are slightly more people low in Bible knowledge who prefer male preachers only. However, the difference is not significant.

Table 36. Factor of Understanding in Woman's Roles in the Preference of Preachers

| Preference | High | | Low | |
|-----------------------|------|-------|-----|-------|
| Male Preachers Only | 16 | 16.8% | 25 | 20.0% |
| Female Preachers Only | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Both | 79 | 83.2% | 99 | 79.2% |
| No Response | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0.8% |

There is more percentage of people low in the understanding of woman's roles in the Bible who prefer male preachers only.

3. Fulfillment of the Calling: Tables below are the numbers and percentages of people believing they have or have not fully exerted their gifts from God and fulfilled their callings from God.

Table 37. Gender Factor in Fulfilling God's Callings

| Fulfillment | Men | | Women | |
|-------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Yes | 34 | 39.5% | 78 | 43.8% |
| No | 44 | 51.2% | 79 | 44.4% |
| No Response | 8 | 9.3% | 21 | 11.8% |

There are more percentage of women believe they are fulfilling God's calling for them.

Table 38. Factor of Biblical Knowledge in Fulfilling God's Callings

| Fulfillment | High | | Low | |
|-------------|------|-------|-----|-------|
| Yes | 48 | 55.8% | 49 | 36.3% |
| No | 34 | 39.5% | 76 | 56.3% |
| No Response | 4 | 4.7% | 10 | 7.4% |

The Bible knowledge significantly affects the fulfillment of callings from God.

4. Freedom in Expression of Feelings:

Table 39. Gender Factor in Expressing Feelings

| Freedom in Expression | Men | | Women | |
|-----------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Yes | 65 | 75.6% | 133 | 74.7% |
| No | 18 | 20.9% | 39 | 21.3% |
| No Response | 3 | 3.5% | 6 | 3.9% |

There is no difference in the freedom of expressing feelings between men and women.

Table 40. Factor of Bible Knowledge in Feeling Expression

| Freedom in Expression | High | | Low | |
|-----------------------|------|-------|-----|-------|
| Yes | 61 | 70.9% | 104 | 77.0% |
| No | 22 | 25.6% | 28 | 20.7% |
| No Response | 3 | 3.5% | 3 | 2.2% |

People rated themselves high in Bible knowledge feel they have less freedom to express feelings. It is probably due to the fear of losing respect from others.

5. Man and Woman's Role Plays in Church and Family:

Table 41. General Data in Role Plays

| | | |
|---|-----|-------|
| Man and Woman Have to Have Distinctive Roles | 96 | 36.4% |
| Role Plays by Personalities, Gifts, and Talents | 150 | 56.8% |
| Role Plays According to Situations | 57 | 21.6% |

The majority believes roles have to be determined by the personalities, gifts, and talents instead of by genders.

Table 42. Factor of Gender in Role Plays

| Role Plays | Men | | Women | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Have to be Distinctive | 35 | 40.7% | 61 | 34.3% |
| By Personalities, Gifts and Talents | 45 | 52.3% | 105 | 59.0% |
| According to Situations | 19 | 22.1% | 38 | 21.3% |

According to the survey, gender does not make a significant difference in the belief of role plays. However, men tend to be more stereotyped.

Table 43. Factor of Bible Knowledge in Role Plays

| Role Plays | High | | Low | |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------|-----|-------|
| Have to be Distinctive | 37 | 43.0% | 44 | 32.6% |
| By Personalities, Gifts and Talents | 55 | 64.0% | 80 | 59.3% |
| According to Situations | 19 | 22.1% | 33 | 24.4% |

People who are high in Bible knowledge tend to be more stereotyped. This is because of the conservative belief.

Table 44 shows that people who believe they have a high understanding of woman's roles in Bible tend to be more stereotyped.

Table 44. Factor of Knowledge in Woman's Roles in Bible in Role Plays

| Role Plays | High | | Low | |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------|-----|-------|
| Have to be Distinctive | 42 | 44.2% | 39 | 31.2% |
| By Personalities, Gifts and Talents | 57 | 60.0% | 78 | 62.4% |
| According to Situations | 21 | 22.1% | 31 | 24.8% |

6. Family Decisions:

Table 45. General Data

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| Decisions should be Made by Man | 39 | 14.8% |
| Discussed by Man and Woman | 186 | 70.5% |
| Woman Has Right in Making Decisions | 12 | 4.5% |
| Depends on Situations | 57 | 21.6% |

The majority believes decisions should be discussed by both husband and wife.

Table 46. Factor of Gender in Family Decisions

| Family Decisions | Men | | Women | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Made by Man Only | 15 | 17.4% | 24 | 13.5% |
| Discussed by Man and Woman | 57 | 66.3% | 129 | 72.5% |
| Women Have Right in Making Decisions | 5 | 5.8% | 7 | 3.9% |
| Depends on Situations | 19 | 22.1% | 38 | 21.3% |

There is a slight difference in the belief of decision-making between male and female participants. However, such difference is not significant.

Table 47 shows that there are more people who rated themselves high in Bible knowledge hold the conviction that decisions should be made by men.

Table 47. Factor of Bible Knowledge on Family Decisions

| Family Decisions | High | | Low | |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------|-----|-------|
| Made by Man Only | 20 | 23.3% | 18 | 13.3% |
| Discussed by Man and Woman | 61 | 70.9% | 102 | 75.6% |
| Women Have Right in Making Decision | 3 | 3.5% | 6 | 4.4% |
| Depends on Situations | 16 | 18.6% | 31 | 23.0% |

Table 48. Factor of Knowledge in Woman's Roles in Bible on Family Decisions

| Family Decisions | High | | Low | |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------|-----|-------|
| Made by Man Only | 22 | 23.2% | 16 | 12.8% |
| Discussed by Man and Woman | 67 | 70.5% | 95 | 76.0% |
| Women Have Right on Making Decision | 4 | 4.2% | 5 | 4% |
| Depends on Situations | 20 | 21.1% | 27 | 21.6% |

Again, almost twice as many people with a high understanding of woman's roles in the Bible hold the conviction that decisions should be made by men, compared to those who are low in understanding.

7. Transcultural Nature of Biblical Passages:

Tables below are the numbers and percentages of people who consider the listed biblical passages about women as transcultural:

Table 49. General Data

| | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| Woman Submission (1 Tim. 2:11) | 64 | 24.2% |
| Woman Not to Rule Over Man (1 Cor. 2:12) | 17 | 6.4% |
| Head Covering (1 Cor. 11:2-16) | 12 | 4.5% |
| Woman to be Silent (1 Cor. 14:34-35) | 5 | 1.9% |
| None are Transcultural | 149 | 56.4% |

The majority believe that such passages in the Bible are contextual.

Table 50. Factor of Gender on the Absoluteness of Biblical Passages

| Bible Passage | Men | | Women | |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Woman Submission | 24 | 27.9% | 40 | 22.5% |
| Woman Not to Rule Over Man | 8 | 9.3% | 9 | 5.1% |
| Head Covering | 7 | 8.1% | 5 | 2.8% |
| Woman to be Silent | 2 | 2.3% | 3 | 1.7% |
| None are Transcultural | 45 | 52.3% | 104 | 58.4% |

More men than women believe such passages as transcultural.

Table 51. Factor of Bible Knowledge on the Absoluteness of Biblical Passages

| Bible Passage | Rich | | Poor | |
|----------------------------|------|-------|------|-------|
| Woman Submission | 23 | 26.7% | 28 | 20.7% |
| Woman Not to Rule Over Man | 9 | 10.5% | 4 | 3.0% |
| Head Covering | 4 | 4.7% | 5 | 3.7% |
| Woman to be Silent | 2 | 2.3% | 1 | 0.7% |
| None are Transcultural | 55 | 64.0% | 83 | 61.5% |

Those who have more Bible knowledge tend to believe in the transcultural nature of Biblical passages.

Table 52. Factor of Knowledge in Woman's Roles in Bible on the Absoluteness of Biblical Passages

| Bible Passage | Rich | | Poor | |
|----------------------------|------|-------|------|-------|
| Woman Submission | 25 | 26.3% | 26 | 20.8% |
| Woman not to Rule Over Man | 9 | 9.5% | 4 | 3.2% |
| Head Covering | 5 | 5.3% | 4 | 3.2% |
| Woman to be Silent | 2 | 2.1% | 1 | 0.8% |
| None are Transcultural | 62 | 65.3% | 76 | 60.8% |

8. The Female Status Believed by the Society:

Table 53. General data

| | | |
|---|----|-------|
| Women are Oppressed | 13 | 4.9% |
| Women Should Be Oppressed for Their Controlling | 29 | 11.0% |
| Women are not Understood | 74 | 28.0% |
| Women Cannot be Understood | 21 | 8.0% |
| Women are Ignored | 43 | 16.3% |
| No Need to Pay Attention to Women | 2 | 0.8% |

Table 54. Factor of Gender on the Female Social Status

| Social Status | Men | | Women | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Women are Oppressed | 4 | 4.7% | 9 | 5.1% |
| Women Should be Oppressed | 7 | 8.1% | 22 | 12.4% |
| Women are not Understood | 23 | 26.7% | 51 | 28.7% |
| Women Cannot be Understood | 10 | 11.6% | 11 | 6.2% |
| Women are Ignored | 13 | 15.1% | 20 | 11.2% |
| No Need to Pay Attention to Women | 0 | 0% | 2 | 1.1% |

Table 55. Man's and Woman's Serving Roles in Mainland China

| Ministry Role | Men | | Women | |
|------------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Adult Sunday School | 13 | 15.1% | 21 | 11.8% |
| Children Sunday School | 22 | 25.6% | 41 | 23.0% |
| Deacon | 6 | 7.0% | 9 | 5.1% |
| Cell Group Leader | 19 | 22.1% | 26 | 14.6% |
| Caring | 11 | 12.8% | 24 | 13.5% |
| Others | 22 | 25.6% | 44 | 24.7% |
| Nothing | 13 | 15.1% | 22 | 12.4% |

The percentage of women serve as adult Sunday school teachers, deacons or cell group leaders is less than that of men. However, the numbers of women Sunday school

teachers, deacons or cell group leaders are more than those of men due to the double amount of women leaders.

APPENDIX E

PROJECT TWO RESULT

Listed below are the evaluation results of the five small group leaders:

| | Before the program | | After the program | |
|-----|--------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
| | Average | Range | Average | Range |
| 1. | 4.4 | 3 to 7 | 5.6 | 4 to 8 |
| 2. | 5.6 | 4 to 7 | 6.2 | 4 to 7 |
| 3. | 5.6 | 5 to 7 | 6.8 | 6 to 9 |
| 4. | 4.6 | 3 to 6 | 5 | 3 to 7 |
| 5. | 5.8 | 4 to 8 | 8.6 | 6 to 10 |
| 6. | 5.2 | 3 to 7 | 7.8 | 7 to 9 |
| 7. | 5 | 4 to 6 | 7.4 | 7 to 8 |
| 8. | 5.2 | 3 to 8 | 6.2 | 5 to 8 |
| 9. | 5.8 | 3 to 10 | 6.8 | 5 to 8 |
| 10. | 7.6 | 5 to 9 | 7.8 | 7 to 9 |

Generally speaking, there is a full-scale shift in all aspects. In this period of ten months, all small group leaders demonstrated improvement in all areas with number 5 (freedom in the fellowship with the Lord), number 6 (freedom in the fellowship with other people), and number 7 (ability to think through life issues) the most prominent, about 50% improvement.

Listed below are the results of the small group members:

| | Before the Program | | After the program | |
|-----|--------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
| | Average | Range | Average | Range |
| 1. | 3.7 | 1 to 6 | 5.5 | 3 to 7 |
| 2. | 4.6 | 0 to 8 | 5.8 | 3 to 8 |
| 3. | 5.7 | 1 to 9 | 6.7 | 4 to 8 |
| 4. | 5.1 | 2 to 9 | 5.7 | 1 to 8 |
| 5. | 5.6 | 1 to 9 | 8.1 | 6 to 10 |
| 6. | 5.2 | 3 to 9 | 6.9 | 5 to 9 |
| 7. | 6.3 | 3 to 9 | 7.0 | 5 to 9 |
| 8. | 6.3 | 2 to 9 | 7.1 | 5 to 9 |
| 9. | 6.6 | 4 to 8 | 7.1 | 5 to 9 |
| 10. | 6.9 | 2 to 10 | 8.4 | 6 to 10 |

Unlike the small group leaders, members rated themselves in quite a wide range, from 0 to 8, 1 to 9, and 2 to 10. Generally speaking, those who rated themselves low in the beginning are the ones demonstrated significant improvement. Except in the area of number 4 (the cultural influence), those who rated themselves low in the beginning showed remarkable improvement. Generally speaking, number 1 (a fulfilled life) and number 5 (freedom in the fellowship with the Lord) are the areas where demonstrates the most prominent improvements (50% improvement).

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VITA
TINA TEH-TRIN CHEN

Ministry Experience:

Mentor to women: 2006 to present

Pastor's Wife: January 2001 to present

Counseling: 2001 to present

Teaching: 2001 to present

Women Ministry: 1990 to present

Academic Background:

Doctor of Ministry in Effective Ministry to Women: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Expected graduation in May 2008.

Master of Arts in Christian Thought: Biblical Theological Seminary, Hatfield, Pennsylvania. May, 2002.

Master of Arts in Counseling: Biblical Theological Seminary, Hatfield, Pennsylvania. May 2002.

Master of Science in Pharmaceutical Science: Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia. June 1980.

Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy: National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan. June 1978.

Professional Experience:

Registered Pharmacist: Fair Oak Hospital in Summit, New Jersey 1986-1990.

South Beach Psychiatric Center in Staten Island, New
York 1981-1985.

Date of Birth: June 9, 1956, Taipei, Taiwan.